

I wrote the following for the pamphlet, *Gay Liberation*, published by the Red Butterfly on February 13, 1970, for the national SMC conference held in Cleveland:

1. Physical Attacks

Hatred and fear of homosexuals is so strong among much of the population, particularly the police, that we are subject to a summary death sentence, for no other reason than being gay. Dozens of gay people have been murdered in New York and San Francisco alone during the last few years. Thousands are beaten every year.

2. Archaic Legal Codes

Even private homosexual acts between consenting adults, which harm no one, are illegal in every state except Illinois. Some state laws call for life imprisonment.

3. Occupational Exclusion

Very few gay people are hairdressers, interior decorators, etc., and not all of these are gay. Gay women and men can be found in all occupations. But very few jobs anywhere are open to anyone who is known to be gay. A gay person can only find and keep employment by living in secrecy and falsifying his own life.

4. Psychological Oppression

Gay people can be slandered by all of the media, public institutions, organized religions, and every part of the establishment.

The hatred of society can be internalized in a self-hatred which poisons every aspect of an individual's relations with himself and others.

The adolescence of a gay person . . . Have you ever had to laugh at a joke ridiculing what you are?

5. Blackmail

6. Housing

Limited by our openness.

7. Freedom to Assemble

Often the only places we can safely meet each other are in the gay ghetto bars and restaurants owned by criminal syndicates."

Many things could be added to this list; for example, the denial of elementary protection under the law, as recently demonstrated by the Michael Maye affair. See Kenneth Green's contribution (Vol. 30, No. 4) for numerous examples of economic discrimination.

The oppression of gay people transcends isolated instances of discrimination, persecution, etc. To understand fully, one must realize that a gay in Judeo-Christian America is an "abomination," the worst and most shameful thing in the world.

Weinstein writes: ". . . gays play no special subordinate role. . . ." I reply that gays play a role as involuntary criminals, outcasts and pariahs. If that isn't subordinate, what is?

The Marxist Overview

I hope we can agree that gays in America are oppressed, severely and severely.

If we see this phenomenon historically, as a 3000-year phenomenon corresponding in time and place with the

triumph of the patriarchy and class-domination societies, then as Marxists we have some explaining to do. Obviously, something like this doesn't perpetuate itself by accident for 3000 years. Historical materialism requires us to find a material basis for the oppression of gay people. It requires us to explain how sexual repression supports class rule.

Marxism is holistic. The overall view is always kept in mind, and aspects of reality are seen as organically interrelated. This is opposed to the method of the bourgeois social sciences, which split things into separate and isolated compartments. For example, bourgeois economics is stripped of all social, political, and historic content.

From time to time every major Marxist has had to argue against some variety of "vulgar" or "mechanical Marxism" which would reduce the forces of history to simple, cause-effect economic issues. Weinstein's hangup over "exploitation" and rigid yet far-fetched quality of his logic perfectly exemplify mechanical Marxism.

Most of Lenin's polemic, *What Is To Be Done?* is directed against the Economists, mechanical Marxists who denigrated theory and intellectual activity, who idealized the "average worker," and who neglected the larger radicalization of the period by confining themselves to trade-unionist activity teaching "the sellers of labour-power to sell their 'commodity' on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal." (*What Is To Be Done?*)

Lenin insisted that: "To bring political knowledge to the workers the Social-Democrats must go among all classes of the population; they must dispatch units of their army in all directions." (*What Is To Be Done* - emphasis in original)

True historical materialism as distinguished from vulgar economic determinism is well represented by Engels in his letter to Joseph Bloch (1890):

"According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brain of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas — also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as nonexistent, as negligible) the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

"We make our history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among

IN DEFENSE OF MARXISM
AGAINST COMRADE WEINSTEIN

(Vol. 30, No. 6)

by John Lauritsen, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

Comrade Weinstein concludes his bulletin, *A Contribution To The Discussion On Gay Liberation*: "More important, by drawing all the correct lessons from this whole chapter we can give a new dimension to the understanding of the younger comrades in what a class approach to politics is all about."

One modest aim of the present contribution is to give a new dimension to Comrade Weinstein's understanding of Marxism, as philosophy and as method of analysis.

A difficulty presents itself, however, in Weinstein's method of presentation. Much of his bulletin has the character of shadow-boxing—specifically, when Weinstein presents an argument to be refuted, one does not know who said or wrote it. There are no attributed quotes in the entire contribution, and one cannot tell if these ideas came from private conversations in California, from things I or others have written, or from Weinstein's head alone.

By setting up and jabbing at various straw dummies, Weinstein presents a viewpoint or viewpoints on the quality and extent of gay oppression; he concludes with a negative assessment of the role gay oppression plays in the revolutionary movement and of the desirability of recruiting gays.

I believe Weinstein's major points can fairly be stated in the following two propositions, which I hope to show

are incorrect:

- 1) Gay people are oppressed—if at all—only trivially
- 2) This oppression (real or imagined) plays no appreciable part in the class struggle.

Is Gay Oppression Real?

It is difficult to believe that anyone in America with a modicum of common sense could deny that gay people are oppressed. Ask people if they would like to be homosexual. Ask them if they'd like their sons or daughters to be homosexual. Ask them if they *are* homosexual. Most would answer "no" to these questions, but I'd bet they'd communicate a lot more. New York City Councilman Ribustello recently said, "If one of my sons was homosexual, I'd hang him!" a not untypical sentiment.

Huey Newton stated that gay people may well be the most oppressed section of American society. In Cleveland, land, Philadelphia, and New York, I have heard Black men discuss whether they felt more oppressed as Blacks or as gays. Almost all felt far more oppressed as gays, and I assume they knew what they were talking about. Gay oppression is not the same as Black oppression, but both are real.

Apparently it is necessary one more time to spell out some concrete aspects of the oppression of gay people

these the economic ones are ultimately decisive. But the political ones, etc., and, indeed, even the traditions which haunt human minds, also play a part, although not the decisive one." (In *Marx and Engels on Religion*, Schocken Books, New York, pp. 274-5)

A mechanical approach like Weinstein's is useless in explaining the major events in history. Take such an immense social upheaval as the Protestant Reformation. Suppose Weinstein had been in 16th-century Germany. Would he have explained to the Reformers that the Burghers were the revolutionary class destined to lead in the overthrow of feudalism and the establishment of capitalist democracy? Would he have told them to restrict themselves to economic demands relating to markets, credit, property, etc? He would no doubt have considered irrelevant the demands of the Reformation itself: Abolish the priestly class! Every man his own priest! The Bible in plain German! Down with the superstitions about miracles, relics, etc! End ritualism! No more indulgences!

As Weinstein wasn't there to offer advice, Brother Luther on October 31, 1517, posted a list of 95 theses for academic debate on the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg — all 95 theses revolving around the single topic: indulgences. One thing led to another, though not in a smooth upward spiral; human reason came out of hiding; and soon, capitalist democracy was on the order of the day.

Now, with gay liberation we can't necessarily make simple one-by-one analogies between gay liberation and the unionist struggles that are sometimes incorrectly identified with the class struggle as a whole. We wouldn't want to. We do not need to understand everything about how gay liberation makes — and is made by — the socialist revolution. To fully explain such aspects of social psychology may be the task of socialist scientists far in the future.

Every struggle for reason is now a struggle for socialism. One does not have to devise mechanical one-by-one analogies to demonstrate this any more than to show that the Copernican astronomy revolution and the bourgeois-democratic revolutions reinforced each other, and that the same forces that burned Giordano Bruno at the stake threw all their weight against the newly emerging property and political relations.

Gay liberation is part of the class struggle and it is on our side of the class barricades. On the other side are the enemies of gay liberation: fascists, Stalinists, big business, feudal religionists. . . .

Marxist Economics and Gay Liberation: Class Definitions

Weinstein writes, "... workers are generally the victims of the worst prejudices perpetuated by the capitalist rulers and their agencies." I feel this is condescending, and should like to know which class or classes have less prejudice than the working class. Marxists from Trotsky to Reich have tended to regard the intermediate strata (petty bourgeoisie) and the little-businessman mentality as the sources of the greatest philistinism and prejudice.

Weinstein implies that, because of their prejudice, the workers will be turned off if they know we support gay liberation. He then, after an explanation of the reserve army of labor, comes to the extraordinary conclusion that since no economic interest is involved for the workers,

we should not ask them to give up their antigay prejudice.

It is obvious that when Weinstein says "worker," he really has a stereotyped "blue-collar worker" in mind. This is wrong. Because of the advancement of the productive forces themselves, an ever-increasing proportion of the working class consists of skilled and educated workers. "Blue-collar" workers are now a minority within the working class itself.

It is unadulterated idealism to define the working class in terms of clothing, life-style, education or the lack of it, skill or the lack of it, prejudice or the lack of it, or physical characteristics. A Marxist defines a working-class person as someone who creates value, works for wages, and is at the mercy of the market for his or her type of work.

The socialist revolution must bring into motion the working class as a whole and must involve persons from every layer of the proletariat. For purposes of recruitment to the revolutionary vanguard, however, young people destined to enter the educated portion of the working class are especially desirable. As Lenin pointed out, "... really capable agitators, etc., are not often promoted from the ranks of the 'average.'" (*What Is To Be Done*)

We cannot afford to cater to backwardness on the basis of some idealized picture of an "average" worker. This is an insult to the working class itself, and to the revolutionary vanguard that will lead it.

Most Gays Are Working Class

If about 80 percent of the American population is working class, then about 80 percent of gays are working class. Gay women and men belong to every economic class and are found in every layer of the working class approximately in the same proportions as straights.

When Weinstein writes, "This absence of a daily grinding exploitation and overt physical oppression in gay people's lives in contrast to the lives of Blacks, Brown women and workers," we can see that his image of "worker" is so stereotyped that a gay person could even be one. Nevertheless, most gays are working class as such they are exploited, and in addition they suffer real oppression far worse than anything experienced by straight workers, either male or female.

The Reserve Army of Labor

Marx's "reserve army of labor" is a permanent pool of unemployed persons who through their active competition on the labor market keep the wages of employed workers in check. If this reserve army did not exist, it would be theoretically possible for wages to rise to a point at which the accumulation of capital — and the system itself — would be threatened.

Weinstein makes the point that women and oppressed nationalities make up a disproportionate share of the reserve army of labor. The oppression of women and oppressed nationalities is thus tied in with the exploitation of the working class as a whole, through the way they play in the reserve army of labor.

This is a very good point. However, Weinstein goes on to claim that gay workers, though exploited workers, are not exploited as gays and furthermore play no role in the reserve army of labor analogous to the roles of women or oppressed nationalities.

Needless to say, the case for gay liberation does

antigay... upon whether or not gays play a special role in the "reserve army of labor. It is only Weinstein's "mechanical" that would imply this. Nevertheless, I think it is something here. I think gays play a very prominent role in the reserve army of labor and in the threat to the employed workers.

Randall Green's article (Vol. 30, No. 4) illustrates the business and government will go to in hunting gays—detective companies, government witchhunts, insurance company investigations, military discharge papers, etc. Weinstein seems to feel an ordinary gay person must stay in the closet and avoid being *known*. But it's not always that easy.

When gays are found out and fired, they not only join the reserve army of labor, they join it permanently. Either they find employment only in a lower paid or different field than the one they left. Women, etc., are hired in periods of prosperity and let go during depression. That's how the reserve army works. But gays, when found out and fired, are finished. Whether or not the role of gays is analogous to the roles of women and oppressed nationalities depends upon the factor of being known or not being known. The threat of being discovered and becoming a marginal person is always there.

In another level, the threat to gay people affects the consciousness of all workers. A white male worker is not a Black or into a woman. He has the guarantee, however, that he will never be labeled as "queer."

When workers can see their company investigating their homosexuality, when they see gays hunted out and fired, their reaction will be to act as straight as possible. Straight equals conforming. Queer equals stepping out of line. To the straight, workers support the war in Vietnam. They wear American flags as badges of their heterosexuality. Because of fear and prejudice revolving around gays, they support capitalism, in which they have no objective whatsoever.

Just as thousands of American boys have given their lives in the imperialist war in Southeast Asia rather than permit their "manhood" to be questioned—in the same way millions of workers remove doubts about the system from consciousness so they won't be "queer." In this way, the oppression of gay people aids in the exploitation of all workers.

Recruiting

Weinstein doesn't feel the gay liberation movement has much potential for involving masses of people. At the same time, his main qualm about recruiting gays is that it might prove *too successful*. A peculiar stand for a revolutionist, to say the least.

Let's take this issue head on. I think if we intervene in gay liberation with a correct analysis that we can recruit large numbers of gays, and gays of the highest revolutionary caliber. It is entirely possible that in the future a large part of the membership and leadership of our movement might be gay. We should not be the least bit afraid of this possibility.

Gay people can be found in all layers of the proletariat and yet are sharply oppressed. This dual fact is of the greatest significance for recruiting a revolutionary vanguard.

The capitalist system has a network of interlocking

institutions designed to coopt the most capable members of the working class. Elite universities, for example, exist not only to train the educated proletariat, but also to recruit the brains of the working class to act as managing agents, ideologues, etc., for the capitalists, who can't run things for themselves. In return for certain real and imagined privileges, some of the most capable young people enter the service of the enemy class.

Gays are not so easily coopted. Gay people are sharply aware of their own oppression, and I think most gays feel genuine rage at the injustice which is done them. When we have established the link between gay liberation and socialism, there are large numbers of highly capable gay people who will stop at nothing to abolish the system which is the source of oppression.

Of course, gay people should be recruited on the same basis as anyone else—acceptance of a socialist program. Gays will join our movement because they agree with our one great goal: the abolition of private property!

Science and Gay Liberation Theory

Throughout his contribution Weinstein uses the straw dummy of "psychological oppression," as though some theorist (of our movement?) had pushed the absurd line that gay oppression is predominantly or entirely "psychological" (perhaps even imaginary?). As materialists we can say that when society persecutes us in concrete ways, then it does things to us psychologically. It makes us suffer; it gives us hangups; it makes us angry; it toughens us up. But gay oppression itself is not just in the head—it is real and concrete.

Weinstein claims the "psychological oppression" premise means, "We would also find a greater necessity to refer young people to psychiatric writers of treatises—some of dubious scientific credibility—explaining these psychological phenomena, than to the traditional Marxist classics in order that the comrades could be 'armed' to try to defend this vulnerable line."

It is true that psychiatric treatises are often of "dubious scientific credibility." The fact is that the gay liberation movement recognizes the psychiatric quacks as a major enemy, an enemy who has carried forward Judeo-Christian superstition under a pseudo-scientific cover. No gay person in our movement has suggested that psychiatry is the discipline to consult for a scientific understanding of sexuality, and it is infuriating that Weinstein should be so oblivious to what we have written on the subject. I presented a consensus of scientific opinion regarding homosexuality in my first article (Vol. 30, No. 1). The disciplines I used were history, anthropology, and statistical research—disciplines which Marx, Engels, and Lenin used and felt at home with.

If Weinstein wishes to express a scientific opinion on the nature of human sexual behavior, then he's got some homework to do. At the very least, he should read Churchill's *Homosexual Behavior Among Males* and Ford and Beach's *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*.

If he doesn't feel competent to express a scientific opinion on the subject, then he should step aside for those of us who are competent.

I, for one, have an academic and professional background in the social sciences, have spent years studying the literature on homosexuality, and have been an activist for gay liberation. I am prepared to debate any-

one—from a bourgeois shrink to a backward comrade—on the naturalness of homosexuality, or related topics. Others have also done research and thinking, and we are eagerly awaiting the go-ahead to prepare Trotskyist literature on gay liberation in its many aspects. We cannot afford to be held back by amateurs.

The time has come to talk about serious things in a serious manner. The present discussion has serious theoretical and strategic issues to deal with, and we should not be reduced to pleading with recalcitrant comrades to give up their prejudices.

David Keepnews' "Intervening In The Gay Liberation Movement" and Sudie and Geb's "Concerning An Inade-

quate Compromise" (Vol. 30, No. 4) treat in a serious way the theoretical and practical aspects of an intervention. Sudie and Geb's article is written with their customary flair—I hope this does not prevent comrades from appreciating the high level of analysis in their excellent contribution. The questions which Sudie and Geb raise in "Concerning An Inadequate Compromise" are questions which we must be able to answer.

I am convinced that our orientation towards gay liberation has far-reaching implications. It will demonstrate whether the course of our movement is determined by principles of scientific socialism or whether it is determined by catering to the subjectivity of individuals.

August 4, 1971

CONCERNING THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT AND BARRY SHEPPARD'S PROPOSED ORIENTATION TO IT

(Vol. 30, No. 7)

by Roland Sheppard, San Francisco Branch

As socialists, we stand opposed to all forms of oppression which exist under capitalism. As principled revolutionists, we support the democratic rights and the struggle for the extension of the rights due all from the capitalist revolution. This, as far as I am concerned, is the starting point for discussion on gay liberation.

I agree with Comrade Barry Sheppard that, unlike workers, oppressed nationalities, and women, gays are not oppressed because of the social role they play in society—Barry Sheppard correctly states that gay people play no special social role.

The *special social roles* played by oppressed nationalities and women are the basis for the divisions within the working class on these questions. As the struggle unfolds and deepens, with the proper leadership of the party, these prejudices can and will be overcome because of the economic and political force of these special roles. Otherwise the unity of the class to the degree *necessary* for a successful revolution will not be achieved. It is, therefore, *necessary* that the party take these prejudices of the class head on and with absolutely no compromise. Any independent movement of these special forces within the class lays the basis for a more rapid development of this unity and our ability to educate the class on these questions. We can clearly show to the class that it *cannot win* unless it subordinates these prejudices, which emanate from capitalist society, to the general overall needs of the class.

With the prejudices against gays, since they play no special social role, there is *no basis* to convince the class that it *cannot win* unless it takes these prejudices head

on. No special role means that there is no special obstacle requiring a subordination by the class of the prejudices.

The question, at the present time, is whether to actively intervene to take these prejudices head on. It must not be forgotten that we are a very small propaganda group with no mass base and isolated from the class in general. I have not yet seen anything written which would demonstrate that we would not be further isolated from the class if we take up this struggle, or that we would not have any needless barriers to the party when the class starts to radicalize. To me, this is a very important question, for it deals with our ability to compete with our opponents for the leadership of the class, and to effectively intervene at the moment when openings appear within the class.

Since there is no clarity within the party leadership and the party itself on the question of gay liberation or on the questions I've raised, the order of priorities of the party on this question is obscure. To leave the question to the individual branches to decide, as suggested by Comrade Barry Sheppard is indefensible. It sets an orientation as if we were a federation of branches with a possibility of a multiplicity of approaches to the question, if not in theory then in deeds, which are not guided by any orientation of the party as a whole. It is up to the national leadership to provide the leadership on this question; to set the guidelines nationally for the party; and to begin by writing a political explanation of where they stand on this question.

August 21, 1971

A CLARIFICATION

(Vol. 30, No. 7)

by Lee Smith, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

Conversations with a number of comrades at the Socialist Activists and Educational Conference have convinced me that the "Comment on Comrade Nat Weinstein's Contribution" I submitted to the discussion July 28 was too cryptic. This article will as briefly as possible attempt to clarify the points I tried (and evidently failed) to make in the earlier article.

August 4, 1970

On Weinstein

My earlier article was in no way intended as an endorsement of Comrade Weinstein's views on gay oppression and the potential of the gay movement. His views on these questions I believe to be absolutely wrong. My purpose, however, was not to answer his errors. I believe they must be answered, but I am confident they will be answered.

At the same time, as wrong as his answers are, Comrade Weinstein addressed himself to the right questions. And he called on the party to clear up the confusion revealed by the discussion so far.

On The Discussion

Without singling out specific articles, the character of most of the discussion so far has been appalling. It has generally approached the issue in a highly subjective fashion. Enormous emphasis has been placed on an issue that cannot be settled by the party, and, in my opinion, does not belong before the party in this discussion: that is, the issue of whether or not homosexuality is a natural and normal part of human sexuality.

Very little has appeared so far about the dynamic and direction of the gay liberation movement—around what demands does an action campaign seem likely to develop that will have a significant impact on the class struggle. (My own opinion is that when the movement's demands crystallize to the point where we can discern a generalized movement toward an action campaign of national proportions, those demands will be for full civil and human rights, specifically for the repeal of all anti-gay laws.)

Very little attention has been given to the question of the resources the party has available to commit in an intervention, an important factor in weighing the gay movement's current stage of development, and what is required of the party at this stage.

Without making excuses for anyone who has written, since most comrades who have made contributions presumably stand by them, a share of the responsibility for the character of the discussion so far must rest with the national leadership. Comrades Sheppard and Weinstein are the only two National Committee members to have had any articles appear in the discussion so far.

Tremendous demands are placed on the party's national leadership's time and energy by responsibilities other than participation in the literary discussion. This

is no doubt the reason for the lack of participation by national leaders in the discussion. Nevertheless, the discussion has unquestionably suffered from the lack of contributions by comrades in the leadership that could have helped orient the discussion in a more productive direction.

On The Question "Is Gay Good?"

Many of the comrades who have written so far argue that the party must take the position that gay is good. The slogan is not an extremely precise one, and some of those who have written have given it a content that makes it something impossible for the party to take a line on. The nature of human sexuality is a subject on which science is far from having said the last word. What constitutes a normal, healthy human sexuality is something we cannot know. It is certainly nothing to be found in this society among either heterosexuals or homosexuals. Comrades can certainly have opinions on such questions, but it would be absolutely wrong to adopt a line on a scientific question to which the answer is not known and which cannot be decided by vote.

I believe it is an error for comrades to maintain that without taking a position on whether homosexuality is a natural and normal part of human sexuality we cannot effectively participate in the gay movement. If that were true, it would say something about the gay movement. The main thrust of the movement will be, I think, against discrimination—against laws and the selective enforcement of laws, against forced therapy that often amounts to plain torture and is meted out to people who do not seek to be treated but have treatment thrust upon them by the state. It is also likely, of course, that struggles will develop around the teaching and preaching of theories that homosexuality is a sickness. But in order to support such a struggle, the party need not have a line on what is the origin of homosexuality or what sexuality will be like in a socialist society. We can oppose the idiotic notion that such a thing as healthy sexuality exists in a sex-repressive class society simply on the basis that all sexuality in class society is distorted. Opposing reactionary theories need not depend on putting forward any complete theory of our own.

On The Party's Orientation

I believe the gay movement will develop into an important and potentially massive campaign to get rid of anti-gay laws and other forms of anti-gay discrimination. However, I am not so confident of this that I would advocate the adoption of a line around which we could intervene based on what is still largely a speculation. To say that this will be the course of the movement's development is at this time too abstract to work out a line anyway. A line of intervention will have to be based on concrete developments that are not yet in the offing.

In the meantime, at the current stage of the movement's

development, which is uneven nationally, the party's current position allows participation to the extent the local situation warrants it and branch resources make it realistic. I believe most branches have failed to take maximum advantage of the available opportunities in the period since the last party convention because of widespread confusion and uncertainty in the party as a whole about what limits are placed on our participation in local struggles, conferences, and defense cases. This has

not had any disastrous consequences, but it has caused dissatisfaction and it has meant some missed opportunities. If the discussion can clear up the confusion and the uncertainty, I think most comrades will agree that continuing the party's present course is what should be done at this time. If it appears to be necessary to extend the discussion beyond September 1 to achieve such clarity, I hope that will be done.

August 22, 1971

REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF GAY LIBERATION DEMANDS

(Vol. 30, No. 7)

by Kendall Green, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

The revolutionary socialist program for the labor movement, the struggles of oppressed nationalities, and the women's movement emphasizes the need to advance democratic and transitional demands in these movements. We have analyzed a number of slogans for these movements to determine their revolutionary potential. In the course of the discussion on the gay liberation movement, it is important to analyze the current and future demands of this movement. Comrade Weinstein, for example, considers gay liberation a struggle for democratic demands with limited potential. Sudie and Geb (Vol. 30, No. 4), on the other hand, consider that the gay movement goes beyond just a democratic struggle to a "gay power" struggle.

What Are Transitional Demands?

Transitional demands were initially raised by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*. They were abandoned by most of the parties of the Second International in favor of a "minimum-maximum" program which concentrated all of the energy of these parties on obtaining minimum reforms of the capitalist system while using the maximum program of socialism only for ceremonial orations. The Bolshevik Party and the early Communist International revived the use of transitional demands which the Trotskyist movement carried on after the Stalinist bureaucratization of the Communist parties. Trotsky contributed much on the character of transitional demands and was responsible for the founding document of the Fourth International—*The Transitional Program*.

In Trotsky's discussion with leaders of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938 about the Transitional Program, and in the program itself, he outlined the criterion for transitional demands as simple slogans which could bridge the gap between the consciousness of the masses and the need for socialist revolution. The demands can only be

fully implemented in a socialist society because they are directed at the base of the bourgeois society. Thus they preserve their revolutionary force through various efforts at compromise.

The classic example of transitional demands is the demand for a sliding scale of wages and a sliding scale of hours to solve the problems of unemployment and inflation. These demands strike at the "right" of capitalists to maintain a permanent army of unemployed to keep wages down and to decrease the standard of living through inflation of prices.

What Are Democratic Demands?

Democratic demands are those which were part of the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the previous centuries or those that flow directly from such demands. Based on Trotsky's analysis, in the *Permanent Revolution*, the struggle for such demands can take on a revolutionary potential in the twentieth century. The capitalist class is opposed to new struggles around these demands. For example, the demand for a nation-state which was part of the German and Italian bourgeois revolutions would logically justify a united Ireland, a separate Black nation and independent Aztlan in the United States. Of course, the capitalists are not going to follow this line of logic, which gives these demands their revolutionary significance.

The demand of women for the right to control their own bodies was not specifically advanced by any of the bourgeois revolutions, yet it is a logical extension of the demands for a laissez-faire state, the separation of church and state, the abolition of privileges based on social rank and the freedom of individuals to pursue happiness. Thus this demand is a democratic one which cannot be fully realized under capitalist society because of the serious damage its realization would have on the nuclear family structure.

It is instructive to note that we also raise demands which are neither transitional nor democratic. The demand for a labor party is not transitional because it has been realized in the majority of bourgeois democracies. The bourgeois revolutions were fought around the demand for the right to form political associations but not specifically for the working class. The important point is that transitional and democratic demands as well as others will play important roles in the coming American revolution. We do not despise certain demands because they are just democratic demands. The struggle for many of these demands will not be consummated until after the socialist revolution.

Can Gay Oppression Be Ended Under Capitalism?

If gay oppression could be eliminated under capitalism, then the demands to end that oppression would have a more limited significance in the revolutionary struggle. David Thorstad in his contribution entitled "Gay Liberation and Class Struggle" outlines the arguments as to why gay oppression cannot be ended under capitalism. He says, "Homosexual behavior threatens the proper functioning of the patriarchal family." Since the patriarchal family is a necessary institution for capitalist society, a threat to it is a threat to the society.

Nat Weinstein in his contribution considers this threat to the family an idealistic, countercultural concept. He states that "the bourgeois family cannot be educated or abolished out of existence. It, like money, will wither and disappear when it is no longer necessary." Such an analysis would lead to declaring the demands for repeal of antiabortion laws, restrictive contraceptive laws, forced sterilization, and demands for free 24-hour child care centers as equally idealistic and countercultural since they weaken the family structure which Weinstein believes is invincible and until after the socialist revolution. The truth of the matter is that the family is already beginning to weaken and break up due to the fact that, unlike money, the family is no longer an important economic unit of capitalist society. This disintegration of the family can be hastened by agitation and mobilization of the masses around demands of the women's movement and the gay liberation struggle. Of course the final elimination of the family institution will only take place in a socialist society but this only makes the point that gay oppression, rooted in the family structure, will also only be finally eliminated in a socialist society.

Sociological Role of The Family

Had Nat Weinstein chosen to argue the opposite point — that gay behavior is compatible with the family and therefore does not threaten capitalism — he would have gotten no further. We realize that capitalist society needs an institution which trains young people for the eventual roles as workers, housewives, parents, and consumers. The family provides such early training. It teaches young people to obey authority, to suppress their sexual desires, and to work at undesirable tasks for a later reward (delayed gratification). These attitudes are necessary for the capitalists to have a workforce at home and in the shop which can be controlled. Housewives and workers must obey authority, they must limit their heterosexual desires in time, place, and manner, and they must be willing to work for paychecks that come days and weeks later rather than demand desirable jobs that would give im-

mediate satisfaction to the worker.

The family also trains young people to accept sex roles assigned to them by patriarchal society. Men are assigned to do dangerous, heavy work, to be sexually promiscuous with women, and to purchase certain consumer items, e.g., cars, because of the aura of sexual promiscuity associated with them. Women are assigned the role of childbearers, child raisers, faithful companion to one male, slave and manager of a household, and the purchaser of most consumer items which are often portrayed as having the power of keeping husbands and children at home.

Homosexual behavior is destructive to this sociological function of the family. It undermines authority because it is atypical behavior which has no place in the patriarchal family. While heterosexual behavior is justified by the church, tax laws, and official moralists by the child it can produce (delayed gratification), homosexual behavior allows no such rationalization. It can only be carried out for the immediate gratification it gives to the participants and thus its existence undermines the delayed gratification concept. Homosexual behavior is supposed to be limited to no place, at no time, and in no manner. Therefore, to act upon homosexual desires weakens the concept of limiting sexual desires and the family system that demands such limitations.

Homosexual behavior weakens the concept of sex roles. If men are only supposed to have sex with women and vice versa, and that part of the sex roles is challenged by homosexual behavior, then the whole role is challenged and weakened. As sex roles weaken, men cannot be motivated to do dangerous tasks — such as warfare — by appeals to their masculinity; nor women to drudgery by appeals to their maternal instincts. Consumer products would be more difficult to sell if men questioned their need for powerful cars or women for *House Beautiful* furnishing.

Reproductive Role of The Family

The family also exists to continue the reproduction of the species under certain conditions. First it is necessary to guarantee the capitalist that the child his wife bears is genetically related to him so that he can feel at ease in transferring the wealth he has obtained to that child at death. Secondly, it is necessary to saddle one worker, either male or female, with the responsibility for the sustenance of several other human beings; and one housewife, always female in this society, with the physical responsibility for care and well being of this household. In order to justify this forced altruism, the capitalist apologists point to a biological relationship between the members of this household.

To maintain these conditions for the reproductive role of the family requires not only the suppression of homosexual behavior, but also the suppression of all erotic behavior outside of procreative sex in marriage. Official morality of class society has fought against the hedonistic concept that erotic behavior is sufficiently justified by the pleasure it brings to the participants. Church and state moralists, by praising motherhood, taxing childless couples and individuals heavier, and passing laws against any other form of sexual activity, have enforced the idea that procreation is the only justification for erotic behavior. Homosexual activity is a direct challenge to this official morality as well as the delayed gratification concept discussed earlier because it is nonprocreative, in any and

all forms.

Since homosexual behavior is a threat to the family, and the family is both a necessary institution for capitalism and one which will continue up to and after the overthrow of capitalism, we can conclude that the attempt to suppress homosexual behavior—gay oppression—will continue until a socialist society is established. Thus gay liberation demands can have a very revolutionary potential in the overthrow of capitalism.

Civil Rights Demands

As David Thorstad points out, the immediate aim of gay liberation is to obtain civil rights for gay people (Vol. 30, No. 2). A number of demands have been raised in this regard including: repeal of "sodomy" laws, solicitation, lewd behavior, and impersonation laws which are used exclusively to victimize gay people. Civil rights demands also include the end to discrimination against gays in civil laws such as marriage laws, immigration laws and proceedings, and in adoption and child custody cases. Legislation to end discrimination in all phases of public life: employment, housing, public accommodations, insurance, loans, and other public services are included as civil rights demands. Demands for preferential treatment to make up for centuries of discrimination have been raised by women and national minorities and are usually included under civil rights type of demands.

A particularly disgusting example of discrimination in civil law recently occurred in California where for the first time in legal history a lesbian mother was given custody of her children, but only on the condition that she end her two-year relationship with her lover. The fact that this was the first time that a lesbian mother was even considered fit enough to care for her own children is disgusting enough, but the gall of the court in attempting to dictate to this woman whom she can love is beyond words.

A little-known federal statute passed in 1952 bars homosexuals from admittance to the United States. Although a federal court did grant a known gay person citizenship in 1971, the law still stands on the books to be kept as a threat and used when needed. The strength of that threat can be seen from the fact that Diego Vinales, an Argentine national arrested in a raid on a New York gay bar in 1970, leaped from the second story of the police precinct house onto the spiked fence below in a vain effort to escape.

History of Civil Rights Demands for Gays

The history of the struggle for repeal of antigay laws goes back to the French revolution. As Thorstad indicates in Vol. 30, No. 3, the first step in bringing civil rights to gay people was the elimination of the sodomy statutes by the Constituent Assembly in 1791. This revolutionary development was codified in 1810 and extended throughout most of Europe by the victorious French army. Although homosexuals have enjoyed the absence of sodomy laws for almost 200 years, they are still far from being accepted by French society. As David points out, the age of consent is higher for homosexual relationships than heterosexual throughout most of Europe. The French government considers gay people a social plague and is committed to trying to prevent the spread of homosexuality. There is an active gay liberation movement in France combatting this and other forms of gay op-

pression there.

In the United States, the repeal of sodomy laws in five states has come about through general legal reforms rather than specific agitation of gay groups. Illinois was the first state to drop its sodomy statute when it adopted the recommendations of the Model Penal Code of the American Bar Association. Gay people in Illinois are frequently entrapped by police and arrested for solicitation. It is a curious situation where homosexual activity is legal but responding to a police officer who suggests it is a crime. It was also in the Chicago 7 trial where the government prosecutor called the peace movement a "freaking-out revolution." Little additional evidence is necessary to show comrades that gays have not gained their liberation in Illinois even eleven years after the removal of sodomy laws from the books.

Idaho adopted a reform penal code which did not mention sodomy on January 1, 1972. However, Representative Wayne Loveless and the Mormon Church quickly accused the new code of "encouraging immorality and drawing sexual deviates to the state." Major support for the new code came from sheriffs, judges, and prosecuting attorneys because of other provisions dealing with gun possession, bad check writing, and rustling. A hysteria was built up until the legislature three months later repealed the entire new code. State Senator William Rode, principal architect of the reformed code, stated, "I don't think there'll be another effort to change the code or even a re-study of it for six to ten years." Idaho is not new to this type of campaign—in 1955 a witchhunt was begun against a supposed ring of homosexuals who were seducing the young men of Boise. Before this mockery of justice was over, 1500 people were questioned and eight convicted for a total of 54 years for sexual activity between consenting adults.

Bills to end discrimination against gays in employment have recently been passed in San Francisco, Ann Arbor, and East Lansing, Michigan. The East Lansing bill applies only to city jobs, and San Francisco extends coverage to employment with companies that contract with the city government. However, such legal efforts will not end job discrimination against gays as shown by the statement of Pacific Telephone and Telegraph which said that it would ignore the ordinance until the "serious legal problems" in it were resolved. Pacific Telephone has previously stated that it will not knowingly hire or retain homosexuals.

In New York City, Intro 475 includes all employees as well as forbidding discrimination against gays by landlords and owners of public accommodations. The bill has been introduced into committee twice. The first time it failed because Mayor Lindsay refused to bring any pressure to bear on the city council even though he had promised to do so. On the second try one of the councilmen who had promised to vote the bill out of committee changed his mind. Behind the failure of Intro 475 is the reformist approach of Gay Activists Alliance, the largest gay group in NYC, in refusing to mobilize gays to demand its passage.

Revolutionary Potential of Civil Rights Demands

Sodomy, solicitation, lewd behavior, and impersonation laws are the major legal mechanism that is used by the state to suppress homosexual behavior. Of course, there are other mechanisms used by the state for this purpose.

—quack psychiatrists, educational institutions, stereotyped images of gays in the media, etc. Many of these other methods have a more direct effect on gay people, but the laws serve as a back-up and justification for the other forms of gay oppression.

The capitalist state tries to maintain repressive laws because they can be used *directly when needed* against those who threaten the state. Since the capitalist state will continue to try to suppress homosexual activity in order to strengthen the family, the struggle against these laws will be an important part of the struggle against capitalism in the coming period. This is not to say that these laws cannot be changed, for they have been partially changed in five states, and further victories are very likely. The state will be loath to abolish all of these laws, as they were to abolish the Jim Crow laws, and will do so only after a major struggle on the part of gay people.

Enactment and enforcement of laws to eliminate discrimination against gays in housing, employment, public accommodations, and civil laws and proceedings would eliminate the economic mechanisms of suppressing homosexual activity. Sexual orientation would then not be a basis for discrimination and exploitation as it is today. (See "Gay Economic Exploitation" Vol. 30, No. 4) Of course the difficulty—aside from getting such laws passed—is that the capitalist state is in charge of enforcing them. Thousands of cases pile up behind slow-moving bureaucracies and courts. The Civil Rights Commission bargains with the oppressive institution without any representation of the oppressed group and arrives at a "compromise" which may take years to implement. Also, action by one sector of the government increasing unemployment, may nullify the efforts of the Civil Rights Commission.

Thus, control of the enforcement apparatus for civil rights legislation, and eventually control of the entire state apparatus becomes important questions in the realization of civil equality. In this sense the demand of civil rights for gays is similar to the demands of civil rights for women, Blacks, or Chicanos.

Other Demands, Gay Bars and Institutions

Because of the discrimination against gays by most of capitalist society's institutions, gays are closely tied to those institutions which cater to them. Gay bars, baths, restaurants, cruising areas, etc., have a dual character. Because of the distortion of sexuality which they present, they tend to isolate gays—making them feel that they are competing with each other for sexual partners. However, because these institutions bring large numbers of gays together, they have a potential for rapid politicalization and mobilization of gay people. Already many bars have been forced to allow posters and leaflets for Christopher Street demonstrations in their establishments. In New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago, gay bars have organized contingents and built floats for the marches. This activist role of gay social institutions can be expanded through pressure of gay groups. Gay liberation social events, like the weekly GAA Firehouse dances, can help in expanding this activist role by providing an alternative to oppressive bars. Establishing such control over these institutions would deprive the capitalists, especially the Mafia, of billions of dollars profit each year and be an important way of mobilizing the millions of gays who attend these institutions.

The existence of these few institutions which cater to

gays does not provide the basis for the demands raised by ultralefts for a gay nation. "Mogghettos" are too dispersed, too intermingled with straight people, and lack any group identification for the demand of control of the "gay community" to be raised aside from nationalist implications of such a demand.

Police

Because homosexual activity is illegal and very subject to police harassment, the role of the police is a crucial issue for gay people. In addition to demanding the repeal of all antigay laws, gay groups can demand the elimination of entrapment and the vice squads are often subject to physical attack by the police hooligans, therefore the demands of removal of the police from cruising areas, bars, etc., and the organization of gay defense squads to protect these areas can be legally raised. Of course the capitalist state would not allow the police to be dismantled and another body of individuals to take their place, even in just a few cities of a city.

Media

The stereotyped presentations of gay people in TV, movies, literature, theater, newspapers, etc., are perhaps the most frequent examples of gay oppression. It is hardly a stand-up comic in America without a repertoire of faggot jokes. Some of these insults will be eliminated by the increasing militancy of gay people changing public consciousness about homosexuality. However, examples of the Black, Chicano and women's movements against similar stereotypes indicate that direct action against the media will be necessary to force them to present homosexuals in positive self-affirming roles. Since the media is a tool of indoctrination and social control, the ruling class will resist any changes which hamper its two functions. We can expect that the media will attempt to mollify the anger of gay people through halfhearted measures and use the image of the "new homosexuals" for a more sophisticated putdown.

Education

A crucial institution for young people during the years in which they acquire much of their knowledge and experience in sexual matters is the educational system, from grade school, high school, and college. The educational system tries to suppress homosexual activity through indoctrination of obvious or suspected gay teachers, ignoring homosexuality or dismissing it as a sickness in social studies education classes, ignoring the homosexuality of important literary and historical persons, lectures on avoiding "strange men," rumors, gossip, and physical harassment and attacks on suspected gays. Thus gay people have a tremendous stake in changing the educational system which warps the sexuality of so many individuals. Demands that can be raised center around the concept that schools should present a positive view of homosexuality and sexuality in general in an atmosphere which allows young people to experiment and work out their own sexual orientation without interference by adults. Specific demands include:

- Sexual education with a positive view of homosexuality and sexuality in general at all levels of education.
- Open homosexuals teaching at all levels.
- Inclusion of homosexuality as an important character

laws in the forms rather of individuals in literature, the arts, history and po-
is was the it adopts specifically studying the sociology, psychology, of the American, artistic, scientific contributions of gay people. The frequent inclusion of such courses in a gay studies pro-
gram. It is the realization of age of consent legislation—realization that people have the right to make their own decisions re-
garding sexual matters. The "freaking" quarters for young people away from adult
necessitation.

their liber- removal of course, such demands would be admittedly opposed by the ruling class since their realization would destroy the educational system created to supply docile, specif-
ically trained workers. The first gay studies program in the U.S. has already been started at California State College in Long Beach. Gay teachers' caucuses have been formed and supported as high school gay groups. Repeal of age-of-
consent legislation flies in the face of the capitalist no-
tionalizing of young people as children without any rights, in-
stead a hysteria, or human dignity—scarcely more than prop-
erty. It is not accidental that the basis of the attack against
the Democratic Party plank at the recent Democratic Party na-
tional convention was the need to protect children and
not to protect the gay or lesbian.

is not ne- as begun *Rights for Young People*

The Socialist Workers Party campaign has taken the
of just, principled position of demanding the repeal of
laws restricting sexual behavior between consenting
between, not just consenting adults. However, there has
been little discussion of sexual rights for young people.
Ford and Frank Beach in *Patterns of Sexual*
have documented that a large majority of "prim-
gill people" allow young people full erotic freedom.
Lepcha of India even believe that young women
not mature without sexual intercourse and they reg-
ularly engage in it from age eleven on. The Lepcha con-
sider it amusing that older men sometimes copulate with
as young as eight. Sex life for the Trobrianders
at six for women and ten for men. Such activity
regularly observed in subhuman primates and among
of lower mammals. Ford and Beach go on to
state that "if they [humans] are ever to derive max-
imum satisfaction from sexual relations, individuals who
are reared under conditions that prevent or seriously
interfere with experimentation during childhood will be forced
to go through the essential learning process after adult-
hood has been obtained. This type of adjustment may
be exceedingly difficult for young adults of either sex
particularly if they belong to a society which inculcates
sexual inhibitions in the developing individual."
Kinsey's studies indicate that pre-adolescent sexual be-
havior is more common in this society than commonly
admitted. 70 percent of males recall engaging in some
sexual play prior to adolescence (40 percent heterosexual
and 44 percent homosexual play). 22 percent actually
attempted coitus during those years. 48 percent of fe-
males reported sex play (30 percent hetero and 30 per-
cent homosexual play) and 24 percent reported being
approached by an adult male during pre-adolescence.
Less than one percent actually had coitus with an adult
male. Kinsey theorizes, "If the child were not culturally
conditioned, it is doubtful if it would be disturbed by

the sexual approaches of the sort involved in these his-
tories.

"... the emotional reaction of the parents, police of-
ficers, and other adults who discover that the child has
had such contact may disturb the child more seriously
than the sexual contacts themselves."

Of course, demands such as repeal of age-of-consent
legislation and private quarters for young people evoke
strong emotional response in many adults due to their
belief that sex is basically vile and that young people
are incapable of rational decisions. Gay youth groups
have organized around these and other questions affecting
them and the Southwest Conference of the National Co-
alition of Gay Organizations backed the demands of the
Los Angeles Gay Youth Group which were similar to
these.

Demands of Other Movements

Other transitional and democratic demands formulated
and raised by labor, women's, and national liberation
movements are also relevant to the gay liberation move-
ment because gays include women, members of oppressed
nationalities, as well as in their overwhelming majority,
workers. Gay groups have readily responded to the call
for gay contingents in antiwar demonstrations, for they
understand the discrimination against gays in the mil-
itary and the sex-role stereotyping of the antiwar move-
ment are issues that link the two struggles together. Like-
wise, the discrimination against lesbians both as women
and as gay, both inside and outside the gay movement
and women's movement link these struggles together. In
the Black movement, writers like James Baldwin have
been put down because of their homosexuality while prom-
inent gays like Jean Genet have spoken out against po-
lice victimization of the Black Panther Party. The Black
Panther Party was one of the first movement organiza-
tions to speak out on the oppression of homosexuals.
In the labor movement, queer-baiting has often been used
to discredit labor organizers. Since gays tend to occupy
the lowest paying sectors of the economy, militant labor
struggles would be of great importance to them and we
could expect many militant labor organizers coming from
these sectors. Thus, despite Nat Weinstein's assertion to
the contrary, there are effective links between the gay
movement and the other movements for social change.
These links provide for united struggles between and
among these movements.

Conclusion

With respect to the controversy about whether gay lib-
eration demands were just democratic or more than dem-
ocratic, we have seen that it is really unimportant. Both
democratic and transitional demands have revolutionary
implications. Most of the demands of the gay movement
are democratic in that they logically flow from the de-
mands of the bourgeois democratic revolutions of the
previous centuries. However the demand to create gay
defense squads has transitional characteristics, but this
does not mean that it is more revolutionary than the
other demands.

In answer to the rhetorical questions asked by Nat
Weinstein about how can we compare the gay libera-
tion struggle to those of women, Blacks, Chicanos and
workers; we have shown that there are several ways in
which they are comparable: they occupy the bottom rungs

demand of the economic ladder, they have independent movements which are raising demands which cannot be realized under capitalism, and there are definite links between these movements.

The purpose of showing such similarities is to argue for a similar serious treatment of the gay movement by the revolutionary vanguard party.

August 24, 1972

THE PARTY'S ORIENTATION TOWARD GAY LIBERATION

(Vol. 30, No. 8)

by George Novack, Lower Manhattan Branch,
New York Local

Three main questions are involved in the current party discussion on gay liberation. The first pertains to the social and historical significance and political weight of the movement. The second concerns the manner and extent of the party's intervention in the organized struggle of gays against their oppression at the present time. The third is the party's attitude toward homosexuality.

The resistance of female and male homosexuals to the hostility and discrimination they suffer is a phenomenon without parallel in modern society. Although homophile propaganda groups have been known since the 1880s, never before has their movement been so broad, open, aggressive and well organized. It has emerged as the related manifestation of a drive for democratic rights by a hitherto terrorized and atomized section of the oppressed.

The many-sided struggles for equality and emancipation set off by the bourgeois democratic movement began centuries ago. It has since moved forward on a broad front and in a highly irregular manner. In the present period of capitalist decadence it is proceeding at an accelerated pace. The vanguard of homosexuals has come upon the arena long after other humiliated and neglected forces have made known their grievances, demanded justice, and fought for their demands against the vicious institutions of capitalism and the church.

The gay liberation movement is an outgrowth of profound changes in family relations, psychological and cultural attitudes, and moral standards, that are transforming sexual customs and judgments. It is an integral aspect of the youth radicalization and the women's liberation movement, an irrepressible expression of the opposition to all forms of oppression and repression instituted and maintained by class society. The gays want to obtain their right to determine their own sexual life and affirm their dignity as human beings without being subjected to any penalties for their way of life.

As yet the gay liberation movement is in its formative stage and limited in scope and numbers. But it has been growing in the groping way new social struggles do. Like other components of the current radicalization, this

sector of protest has a dynamic of its own. It can be expected to spread nationally and internationally and draw into its ranks hitherto silent and passive people; awaken, activate, and mobilize them against the prejudices and discrimination that afflict them.

It is one of the tenets of the theory of permanent revolution that demands for democratic and civil rights by large groups of people may be partially conceded but their needs cannot be fundamentally and fully satisfied and realized under imperialist auspices. The struggle of homosexuals for an end to their victimization is no exception. The removal of certain legal inequities and disabilities will not suffice to give them the dignity they seek. The changes they aspire to bring about not only affront deeply lodged prejudices of bourgeois society and the churches, but call into question auxiliary props of the nuclear family and the marriage code.

The attacks upon such institutional arrangements of the established order imparts an anticapitalist tendency to the gay struggle, even if many of its participants fail to recognize the underlying social and political implications of their challenge.

Except for the International Socialists, ours is the only organization on the left in this country to take a positive attitude toward the gay liberation movement and view it as a legitimate component of the rising radicalization. Its development indicates how certain novel phenomena of radicalism and democratism can spring forth in the highly advanced capitalism of North America sooner than elsewhere.

Some comrades dispute this evaluation of the significance of gay liberation, assign little weight to it as a social and political factor, and are dubious of its prospects. The actual growth rate of the movement as it takes more definite shape over the next years should settle this issue.

* * *

The second question to be considered is the party's orientation toward the movement. This is a tactical matter that has to be decided on a rounded view of the present

situation.

The premise from which the party proceeds is its principled position as a defender of democratic rights. The SWP is opposed to all forms of the oppression of homosexuals and vigorously supports the struggles for their rights, as we are doing. This is one of the planks in our national election platform.

This statement of policy and purposes does not, however, dispose of the tactical decision that has to be made: what the party should do in this area at the present conjuncture.

In Barry Sheppard's opinion, it would be inadvisable to engage in a concerted national intervention in gay liberation activities now, in view of the dispersed state of the movement and the schedule of political and organizational priorities of the party. Our participation as an organization should not go beyond support to the initiatives of gay groups around issues of their rights, sympathetic reporting of developments, and disseminating our ideas among them.

This is a more restricted approach than the one being implemented in the antiwar and other movements. Some comrades urge a full-scale participation in gay liberation on the same order as our work among the feminists. They want us to become the "leaders and best builders" of the movement. This does not seem warranted under the given circumstances. The orientation proposed by Barry Sheppard is adequate for the present. What further steps the party may take will depend upon the further development of the movement.

* * *

The third point at issue, which has been raised in several contributions to the discussion, concerns the party's attitude toward sexual relations and activities, and homosexuality in particular. This question is sometimes confused and fused with the second question, although the two are quite distinct and should be separately treated.

The jurisdiction of the revolutionary party does not encompass everything; it is not totalitarian. There are areas in which the Marxist vanguard takes positive and unambiguous positions. These embrace all aspects of the struggles of the exploited and oppressed against class domination and victimization. On this basis the SWP

staunchly defends full democratic rights for homosexuals and the removal of all disabilities from them. Freedom from sexual repression and oppression is an essential element of humanity's efforts to cast off the ills of class society.

At the same time there are many areas where the party does not assert an official opinion or exercise its authority. These include, for example, the conflict of rival concepts and theories in various branches of the natural sciences and in mathematics, the competition of artistic schools and literary tendencies, matters of dress, diet, amusement, etc. Individuals have the right to make up their own minds on all such matters so long as their conduct does not contravene party needs.

Some comrades insist that the SWP go beyond its present position to advocacy of the virtues of homosexuality in unblocking the full potential of sexuality. The party especially refrains from interfering in one of the most sensitive and intimate realms of personal relations, erotic life. It cannot be called upon to set a seal of approval or disapproval on any specific type of sexual relations or activities. Such matters belong to the sphere of personal preference and individual decision.

While the party does not prescribe norms of sexual practice for its members or anyone else, it does have one categorical imperative that applies to the conduct of its members in all areas. The interests of the collective take precedence over the actions of any single individual whose behavior may adversely affect the party's work.

* * *

Our party is the first to encounter and grapple with the problems presented by this novel feature of the radicalization processes. We should therefore proceed with a certain care in working out our policy. The lessons of our experiences and discussions can be helpful to other sections of our world movement in dealing with gay liberation.

Our work with and in the gay movement has essentially the same aims as in other sectors of the radicalization. We support their just struggles for democratic rights and seek to win over the best gay activists to our program for total human liberation through the socialist revolution.

August 28, 1972

The literary discussion on the gay liberation movement has tended to center on criticism of proposals I made in an article in Vol. 30, No. 1 of the Discussion Bulletin. On the one hand, a number of comrades have argued that the party should go beyond the proposals I made, both in terms of taking a position on a whole range of questions dealing with sexuality, and in terms of the extent of party involvement in the gay liberation movement as it now exists. On the other hand, Comrades Weinstein and Roland Sheppard are opposed to any party involvement in the gay liberation struggle, if I read them right.

Some of the questions raised about my own position seem to be based on misunderstandings, possibly caused by the brevity of my first comments. Others, however, reflect genuine differences.

Comrade Fred Feldman accurately characterized as a diversion from the purpose of the discussion the position developed most extensively by Comrades Gebert and Trippet, but also by other comrades, that the party must adopt a position on the nature of human sexuality and homosexuality in order to arrive at a correct party-building approach to the gay liberation movement, and his article developed the point well. I would like to comment on two things relevant to this question.

First, the party is a political organization. Its aim is a political one: to construct a mass revolutionary socialist political party that will lead in the conquest of state power by the working class, opening the road to the construction of socialism. In keeping with its aim, the party adopts political positions that guide its work. It does not take positions on a whole range of scientific, cultural and other questions—to do so would cut across its purpose, dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and cripple its ability to mobilize the masses on political questions.

Secondly, this particular problem is further complicated by the fact that the whole question of the scientific investigation of sexuality and the related one of psychology is still in its infancy. Especially concerning homosexuality, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available. If we were to attempt to adopt a particular viewpoint on the nature of homosexuality, we would become embroiled in a hopeless tangle of opinions, prejudices and personal preferences with little hope of reaching any scientifically valid conclusions, even if that were within the purpose of the SWP, which it is not.

Look at some of the more ludicrous aspects from the political viewpoint, of this discussion: are we really going to allow ourselves to become diverted into a debate over the sex lives of cows, insects and chimpanzees? Over whether heterosexual love is even sexual (Comrades Gebert and Trippet apparently dismiss heterosexual love as merely the "reproductive act")? Over whether the future liberated human will include "liaisons with animals" in its sexual repertoire? Can we definitively answer even

the more germane questions, like the nature of sexual orientation among the communist humans of the future?

While some comrades seem to have very definite opinions about the nature of sexuality among future communist humanity, I assume that most comrades find themselves in the same uninformed position I am in—we can't tell what future sexuality will be like. The socialist revolution will lay the foundations for the transformation of human culture in all spheres, including sexual and other personal relations, but exactly how this will affect sexual relations can only be a subject for speculation at this stage, as is true of a whole range of aspects of the future classless society. We can say that, in sexual relations as in every other sphere, we can expect future communist humanity to be superior to present day humanity. We cannot go much beyond the assertion that the present sexual misery of masses of people will be overcome. And if we extrapolate further, we run a strong risk of merely projecting our own personal preferences, losing sight of the fact that each and every one of us has been formed (and deformed) under capitalism. And in any case, what we say or think about the subject, as Comrade Feldman has pointed out, will certainly be ignored by the free people of the communist future!

If a note of utopianism has crept into the discussion in the form of speculation on the nature of sexuality in the classless society, it is also present in the corollary that some comrades seem to draw from their conviction that bisexuality is the wave of the future—that gayness is in and of itself, per se, progressive right here and now. Comrades Trippet and Gebert are the most definite on this, asserting that gay is better. Their argument is twofold: bisexuality is the "natural" state of humanity, and bisexuality and even exclusive homosexuality in the present are progressive because they represent some kind of revolt against the bourgeois family institution. The argument that bisexuality is the "natural" state of human sexuality falls into the area of speculation dealt with above. There is no definitive scientific proof either that this is so, or is so in the sense that present-day bisexuals preview what communist humanity will be like.

The argument that bisexuality and homosexuality are progressive because they imply sexual activities that fall outside the framework of the family institution, is false. Comrade Weinstein correctly refuted this argument, pointing out that it falls into the category of attempting to build a "counterculture." Homosexuality and bisexuality are no replacements for the family—sexual activities of any kind in no way replace the *social* functions of caring for the young and old, performing labor such as cooking, laundry, etc. The reactionary institutions of the patriarchal family will wither away in the process of the construction of socialism, as the social functions it now performs are progressively taken on by society as a whole. And it certainly remains to be seen whether homosexuality is an "answer" to the sexual problems of the masses.

All personal relations in capitalist society are warped and distorted, including relations among bisexuals and homosexuals. It is patently false to assert that homosexuals

or bisexuals in this society have superior personal relations to heterosexuals, including heterosexuals in family units. There are no personal solutions to the problems generated by capitalism, including intimate problems of personal life. No sexual orientation is revolutionary *per se*—the only criteria for determining what is revolutionary or not are political, and the only revolutionary people are those who are fighting for a revolutionary political program. A comrade who has a miserable personal or distressed sexual life but finds the energy to help build the party is a revolutionary. A bisexual, heterosexual, or homosexual totally immersed in the pursuit of the will 'o the wisp of a harmonious personal life under capitalism, coming up for air long enough to vote for capitalist candidates or otherwise support the system, is not.

The party should take no position at all on the nature of sexuality or homosexuality, nor try to determine what is "good" or "bad" about heterosexuality or homosexuality, and not advocate any specific sexual orientation.

Related to the question of the nature of the party is the one concerning the party's position on transvestism that Comrades Gebert and Trippet have raised. First, it should be clear that the party has no ban on membership of transvestites. It does have a concern with the image of the party in the eyes of its constituency as projected by the dress and decorum of individual members that would in fact prohibit certain female clothing, like dresses, from being worn by male comrades. This comes under the general guideline of not conducting ourselves as far-out types. If our image were to become exotic, that would stand in the way of recruiting and influencing masses of people justifiably suspicious of people that are obviously extremely eccentric. A political person who deviates too far from the social norm in questions like that of dress has lost or never had a sense of proportion about what is politically important and what is secondary, and this is immediately apparent to anyone she or he is trying to influence. The wearing of this or that kind of clothing has nothing to do with being a revolutionary, and responsible members should subordinate personal whims or desires in this regard to the political objective of not placing unnecessary obstacles in our way. Our general rule should be to dress within the socially accepted styles, and the party units have the responsibility to see to it that individual members do not abuse the party by projecting an exotic image of the party.

We have been talking about a tendency of some comrades to lose a sense of proportion in the course of this discussion. I think this is evidenced in another way, on the field of theory, which relates to the writings of Wilhelm Reich. Comrade Lauritsen, for example, mentions Reich along with Trotsky as a representative Marxist.

Wilhelm Reich was a disciple of Freud who developed psychoanalysis along the lines of Freud's early thinking. From his experience as a psychoanalyst, as well as from conclusions he drew from Freud's theory, Reich became convinced that emotional illness and sexual misery were widespread in the population as a whole, that they were fundamentally socially caused, and that therefore the individual treatment possible in psychoanalytic technique could never get at the root of the emotional problems of the masses. He became a socialist, seeing the necessity of a socialist revolution before the foundations for a healthy psychological and sexual life for the masses could be laid down. He first joined the Social Democracy and

then the German Communist Party, before the triumph of fascism.

He rejected Freud's view that psychoanalytical ideas and methods could explain history or society. He accepted the Marxist view, during this period of his life of the origin of class society, the dynamic of the class struggle, the necessity for the socialist revolution. He accepted in general Engels' views on the origin of the family as having gone hand in hand with the rise of class society. He developed the theory that the place of psychological investigation as developed by psychoanalysis was to explain the psychological impact of the family upon the individual, especially the results of sexual repression rooted in the family that psychoanalysis had unearthed. This investigation, he asserted, could reveal part of the mechanism by which the family institution instills reactionary morals: a tendency to submit to authority, etc., in individuals and that this knowledge could help revolutionists better understand the prejudices they are up against. It is my own opinion that there are important insights and food for thought for Marxists in many of Reich's earlier writings along these lines.

However, with the consolidation of Stalinism and the victory of German fascism, Reich became disillusioned with the proletarian revolution. He lost sight of and denied that the objective interests of the working class could impel it to struggle for power, and that this struggle could win, given the proper leadership. He retreated from the historical materialism of Marx back into psychology, finding the reasons for the defeat in Germany and the rise of Stalinism in the intrinsic psychological defects of the masses. He thus became an *opponent* of Marxism, *rejecting* our analysis of the factors leading to these defeats suffered by the proletariat. He became entrapped in a vicious circle, believing that the salvation of humanity could come about only through a social revolution, but that the social revolution was precluded as long as human sexuality was distorted, and it would remain distorted as long as there was no social revolution.

We can learn something from Reich's description of how reactionaries can use the sexual morality instilled in people by the family, religion, etc., to bolster their own rule, but only if we keep such insights in proportion, i.e., within the framework of Marxism, and not make the mistake that Reich did of elevating this one aspect of reality into the key factor, obliterating the class struggle in the process.

Concerning the theoretical question of developing a materialist explanation for the oppression of gay people, some comrades took exception to my statement that discussion about why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality, need not concern us in trying to understand the nature of the *oppression* of gay people. These comrades assert that we must develop a full theory of sexuality in order to understand the oppression of gay people. Besides the difficulties in doing so already discussed, it is not necessary, although if such scientific knowledge were in fact developed by science, even under bourgeois auspices, it would shed light on this question.

I put forward the outline of a hypothesis that gay people are oppressed as a byproduct of the ideology and morality upholding the family system. However, in carefully reading the ideas of comrades on why homosexuals are oppressed, including comrades who took exception to my remark that we can discuss this question without

first fully understanding the nature of homosexuality, their viewpoints generally fall within the hypothesis I outlined. They find the roots of gay oppression in the ideological and moral superstructure of society.

Only Comrade Maggi has taken direct exception to this. However, I cannot follow his argument, for he points to the contribution by Comrade Thorstad to buttress his position. But Comrade Thorstad, too, traces the roots of the oppression of homosexuals to the ideological and moral superstructure.

There is not a one-to-one correspondence between the superstructure of society and its economic base, and this is especially true in relation to ideas, morals, etc. In the case under discussion, we can see that different class societies have taken very different attitudes towards homosexuals, although all have been class societies and had one form or another of the male-dominated family. In any case, an analysis of the causes of the oppression of gay people must be done in the concrete. We can expect that in time, our views on this can become more clarified, and we can afford to take that time.

The important thing now is the political conclusions to be drawn. Comrade Maggi agrees with me that the struggle for gay liberation is a democratic struggle. Some comrades have taken umbrage at this characterization of the nature of the gay liberation struggle, apparently feeling that it disparages that struggle. Comrade Maggi effectively answered them, and there is no need to repeat his arguments.

Comrades Weinstein and Roland Sheppard also agree with the position adopted by our last convention of full support to the struggles of gays for their democratic and human rights against all the forms of oppression and discrimination they suffer under capitalism. But the course they appear to favor would lead to relegating it to a file marked "positions adopted but better forgotten."

If Comrades Gebert and Trippet, based on their own views of human sexuality, present the dubious notion that gay people will soon be in the majority, Comrade Weinstein, through a few verbal sleights of the hand, has the mass of gay people not oppressed at all, except "psychologically." In the first place, the psychological oppression of gay people is real. We don't have to invent theories about this—many gay people have eloquently described it. We have dealt with this category of the psychological aspects of oppression and exploitation in relation to other spheres: Engels in the *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, Marx in *Capital*, and the speeches of Malcolm X are examples.

Secondly, while it is true that open gays suffer more direct discrimination than those concealing their sexual orientation, Comrade Weinstein draws too sharp a line between the two categories. Comrade Weinstein apparently thinks that workers don't have the time and energy to pursue a fulfilling sex life. But they are known to have a thought or two about it once in a while, and if they happen to be gay, that means they have to be "open" with at least one other human being, and quite probably a lot more. Thus almost all gays, except the most seclusive and repressed, are forced to deal with the discrimination and oppression gays suffer. We can expect that the mass of gay people will increasingly identify with the gay liberation movement since it is dealing with questions that directly affect the real interests of most gay people, especially as the movement matures, rejects the countercultur-

ism that is one trend within it (reflected, as we have noted even in our party), and concentrates more on the political questions of opposition to the concrete forms of discrimination gays suffer.

Comrade Weinstein argues against those who equate the social weight of the gay liberation struggle with other more massive and central struggles, or who lose their sense of proportion in other ways, even to the point of obliterating the class analysis of society. But the errors of some proponents of gay liberation cannot be used as a justification for rejecting the gay liberation struggle altogether. Because someone may falsely equate the fight against the Vietnam war with the gay liberation struggle does not imply that the gay liberation struggle is not important.

Comrade Weinstein correctly points out that the dynamic of the gay liberation struggle is different from the Black struggle, for example. It is not as central to the dynamic of the coming American revolution. Starting with agreement with the observation I made that gays play no special social role, neither in relation to the means of production, nor to the family as a social unit, as women do, nor in a way similar to an oppressed nationality, he draws the incorrect conclusion that struggles like those of gays for an end to their oppression are of not much concern to us or to the anticapitalist revolution.

While it is true that gays play no special social-economic role as gays, that in and of itself does not exhaust the question. The oppression of gay people is related to class society and its needs. The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the class enemy and is in the interests of the working class and of socialism. It does confront and help break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society. To point out that it is not *necessary* to the overthrow of capitalism does not lead to the conclusion that it has no anticapitalist role to play whatever. (And we should add, that it is necessary to win gay liberation before we can say that a classless society has been built.)

Comrade Roland Sheppard makes this error in an even clearer way. He says that we take positions in favor of the oppressed nationalities and of the struggles of women only because this must be done to achieve the necessary unity of the class for the class to win. That is not so. Revolutionary situations have arisen time and again without the majority of the working class understanding the woman question, for example. Such situations will arise again—certainly in Bolivia and Argentina in the recent past there have been revolutionary situations, without the question of women's oppression coming to the fore.

We must not confuse the question of what may be necessary for the taking of power by the workers, and the program of the vanguard party that intends to lead not only the taking of power, but the mobilization of the working class and all its allies in the historic task of rebuilding society from top to bottom, eliminating every vestige of discrimination and oppression spawned by class society. And, while power will be taken by the working class around the most burning issues of the class struggle, which are *part* of our full program, power is much more likely to be taken by the working class to the extent that it succeeds in mobilizing the widest layers of the oppressed, convincing them by its deeds that the taking of power by the working class will in fact end all forms of oppression.

That's why the party which must be built to lead the

class has to help educate the class to fight capitalism on all fronts, as Lenin explained in *What Is To Be Done?* We do this through the vanguard party itself seeking to champion all struggles against discrimination, oppression, all people kicked around by capitalism and its state. Comrade Weinstein lists "repressed religious sects, pacifists, atheists, proponents of defense of the right to bear arms and drug culture cultists," raising the red herring of the rhetorical question of whether or not these should be placed on the same level as the working class, oppressed nationalities and women, and concluding, apparently, that whether these people are victimized is of no concern to the revolutionary party. (I don't understand his including "proponents of the right to bear arms" in this list—aren't we "proponents of the right to bear arms"?) Like Lenin we should say that, if pacifists suffer at the hands of the capitalist state, we should come to their defense—the specific character of that defense of course depends on all kinds of factors in any given situation.

What about repressed religious sects? We have a political position in favor of religious freedom—we're against them being kicked around. In certain countries today, this is a very important question—it was a key question in the bourgeois revolution, and remains a key question today in Israel, the Arab countries, the Soviet Union, and Ceylon, to mention just a few.

Comrade Roland Sheppard and Comrade Weinstein virtually exclude breaking down the prejudices of the mass of workers against gay people. In a certain sense, it is true that these prejudices will not be completely broken down until some time after the creation of a workers state. But it is not true that workers cannot be won to a position that gay people should not be oppressed. What interests do workers have in the oppression of gay people? If students can be by and large won to this position, in spite of their prejudices, why cannot workers be won to this position?

Comrade Roland Sheppard says that the prejudices against the oppressed nationalities and women held by the working class (obviously he is talking only about the white male section of it), can be subordinated to the needs for unity of the class, but this is not the case for gays. He is correct in stressing that it is the class interests of the workers that will lead them to act in ways that objectively overcome their prejudices, but he has too narrow a definition of class interests. These interests include not only a calculation of what degree of unity is necessary to win power, but also of the need of the working class to win the widest possible support in all layers of the population.

Let us assume for example that a labor party develops in the near future, based on a radicalization of the working class. It will be confronted by the issue of gay liberation, as the capitalist politicians already have. What would our policy be? Wouldn't we have to stand for the adoption of a plank supporting the rights of gay people? Couldn't good and reasonable arguments be advanced for our position, arguments which would find support among radicalized workers?

This leads to another question. If Comrades Weinstein and Roland Sheppard support the position adopted at the last convention, do they think that position should be made known to the public? If we should, like the CP, not be identified in any way with gay liberation because we would be "further isolated from the class if we take up this struggle," should the party have adopted this posi-

tion? Further, given that this is the position of the party, what should we do when an organization is formed to fight to carry it out? Do we support the objectives of that organization, insofar as they coincide with our position? Do we support concrete struggles against the oppression of gays? We can't have it both ways. We don't past political positions to file them away.

Comrade Weinstein points out correctly that the gay movement does not have the same direct links with the class struggle that the Black movement and other movements have. The movements of the oppressed nationalities in the United States—both because their national-democratic demands cannot be met except through the proletarian revolution, and because of their overwhelming proletarian composition—raise almost from the beginning demands of the working class as a whole. The women's movement, also, because of women's role in the family and work force, raises class demands. The gay movement is much narrower in the scope of its demands, which are essentially limited to democratic rights for gay people. (But it cannot be concluded from this that gay liberation is of no importance to the class struggle.)

The gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise. The gay liberation movement clearly does not raise such a central question of world politics as the antiwar movement does. In our long-term strategic priorities, then, it is certainly more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities, or the struggle against imperialist wars. But this estimate of relative proportions and priorities does not negate the significance of the movement for us.

This brings me to the final point, the question of our tactical approach to the gay liberation movement at the present time. Given our political position of support to the struggles of gay people against their oppression, how we carry out that support is a tactical question. I feel that much of the matters raised above, from both sides, have obscured the real issues concerning our tactical approach.

First of all, we should recognize that in discussing tactics we are attempting to determine what is the best thing to do to advance our political program and build our party. We do this in the context of the specific situation we face both objectively and in relation to our own forces, other campaigns we are involved in, and similar considerations. On many questions we are able to intervene only through our press. This does not mean that we do not support that particular issue. For example, we support the struggles of the Native Americans, but we do so primarily through our press and election campaigns at present. Comrades who insinuate that the party is prejudiced against Native Americans thereby, or has a position of an "inadequate compromise" with prejudice, would be wrong—we just do not have the strength at present to do much more, given other key areas of work.

Our conception of tactics implies flexibility. If the objective situation changes, our tactics may change also. The tactical approach I outlined in my original article was based upon an assessment of the state of the gay liberation movement at the present time. On the basis of that assessment, and given our commitment to other areas

work, I stated my opinion that it would be a mistake for us to organize a national fractional intervention into the gay liberation movement at the present time. (Some comrades have misunderstood this to mean that the party press, national election campaign, etc., would not present the party's position; clearly, this is not what is meant.)

I do not believe that new information has been revealed by the discussion, or the objective situation has so changed as to necessitate a re-evaluation. On the national level, there remains no national coalition formed to carry out actions around the issues of gay oppression. There is no national organization of gay groups, with the exception of the National Coalition of Gay Organizations, as Comrade Maggi pointed out. But this group is oriented primarily towards the elections, and our political position on gay liberation as expressed in our campaign is clear. Comrade Maggi hopes that this coalition will develop into something more—if so, we can deal with it then.

Comrade Hillson and others have raised the argument that our intervention could be the crucial factor in forming a viable national gay liberation organization, and they cite the precedents of our work in the antiwar and women's liberation movements.

We have found from experience in both the antiwar and women's movement that any attempt by any of the socialist tendencies to form antiwar or women's groups essentially around their own organization are doomed to be very narrow in the present situation in this country. No tendency has sufficient hegemony in the left, let alone among the broader layers such groups could appeal to, to build any such groups on a viable basis. If this is true of the antiwar and women's movements, which have far wider appeal than the gay liberation movement, it is doubly true of the gay liberation movement.

We have been successful in helping to build antiwar and abortion action coalitions around key demands. We have been instrumental in helping to hold these coalitions together. But comrades must not misunderstand the real situation and slide over into thinking that, because of the role we have played in holding them together these coalitions are able to exist solely because we want them to.

In the women's movement, for example, we saw the independent development of action coalitions in a number of states before WONAAC was formed. It was clear that the abortion question was becoming more and more important, a focus of the women's movement. The success

that WONAAC has had—and the potential it continues to have—reflects this situation. Thousands of women have shown themselves ready in action to help build WONAAC, in collaboration with us, in the face of not unimportant difficulties. There is not yet an analogous situation in the gay liberation movement. No clear issue or issues has yet emerged as the rallying point of the gay liberation movement.

Under the circumstances, for us to attempt to build an action coalition around issues of gay oppression, before the issues are clear in the gay movement around which such a coalition would be built, before there is significant motion in the movement itself towards such an action coalition, would be premature. The effort most likely would fail in its objective and divert our energies from more immediately rewarding tasks.

The examples raised by various comrades of gay liberation struggles we would want to relate to have occurred on a local level. Thus, if the branches have the flexibility to relate to such developments as they occur, within our present priorities, we will not be missing the opportunities comrades have pointed to.

The kinds of struggles we should support include actions like the Christopher Street demonstrations (intervening with our political position), the defense case that occurred in Minneapolis, the struggle around Intro 475 in New York—concrete actions and struggles. It would do us little good to have comrades assigned to participate in essentially social events, or in the counterculture equivalent of the "livingroom feminists" of the gay liberation movement.

Comrade Roland Sheppard and others raised the question of whether this proposal to relate to gay liberation struggles on the local level, where they are occurring, isn't in fact some kind of federalist concept. No, for two reasons. Any such decisions by the branches are within the framework of the political position adopted by the party convention and in accordance with our priorities as decided upon nationally. This work, like all branch work, is under the supervision of the Political Committee and national office.

This orientation on the tactical level would enable us to support *concrete struggles and actions* around issues concerning the oppression of gays and still keep our activities in this area centered on the political questions and in proper proportion to the overall tasks of the party.

August 29, 1972

Is homosexuality a normal and natural form of human sexual behavior?

The gay liberation movement has responded to this question with the assertion that "Gay is Good." The meaning of this slogan is the rejection of the notion that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality, or that homosexuality is a deviation, an abnormality, or a sickness. It is both a message to closeted gays that they should accept their homosexuality with pride and a notification to straight society that we will no longer allow it to use its warped norm of exclusive heterosexuality to deny us the humanity we share with heterosexually oriented persons.

Before going any further, let me clear up one thing. That is the matter of whether or not it is proper or necessary for the revolutionary party to take a position on such a question.

It is true that the party does not take a formal position on all social, scientific, or historical questions. So far as I know, for instance, it has never taken a formal vote on whether biology is women's destiny, on the matriarchy, or on whether Black is beautiful. I have heard such observations used in an attempt to justify taking no position on the "controversial" question of whether homosexual behavior is normal and natural. But the comparison is misleading: In spite of the fact that we have no formal position on these matters, there is no pretense in our propaganda of leaving aside or suspending judgment on whether biology is woman's destiny, on whether there ever was a matriarchy, or on whether Blacks are inferior to whites; if there were, our intervention into the women's and Black liberation movements would be quite different from what it is. Yet it is precisely such a suspension of judgment on the normality of homosexuality that is implied by the argument that no position on the question should be taken.

To suspend judgment on this question would be to place a question mark over the underlying assertion of the gay liberation movement that gay is just as good as straight, that homosexual behavior is as much a part of human sexual potential as heterosexual behavior. There is no justification for such a question mark.

An affirmative answer to this question is not only required from a scientific point of view, it is also essential for a correct political appreciation of gay liberation. A negative answer to this question, or even a suspension of judgment on the matter, would not merely hamper, but actually damage any intervention into the gay liberation movement that the party should attempt to undertake. Indeed, if the party does not take a firm stand upon the concept that gay is good, it would probably be better off not attempting to intervene in the gay liberation movement at all.

The scientific evidence in favor of an affirmative response to this question has been presented elsewhere in this discussion and does not need to be repeated. So far no one has attempted to dispute it. I will not degrade the discussion at this point by adding to it a refutation

of the various theories of quack psychiatrists and pseudo-scientists over the years as to the cause of homosexual impulses (masturbation, degenerated genes, mental insanity, oversatiation with natural pleasures, "inversion" [man's brain in a woman's body and vice versa], hereditary inferiority, "psychic hermaphroditism," failure to evolve beyond a primitive state of bisexuality, distribution of genital nerves around the rectum, *larghezza solante* [male aversion to the largeness of the human vagina, thus driving them to the tightness of the male rectum], hormonal imbalance, prenatal stress, close-binding-intimate mothers, etc.). For a general view of the gay liberation movement's attitude toward the psychiatric profession's "sickness theory" of homosexuality, I refer comrades to the excellent statement distributed to a meeting of the American Psychiatric Association last May which follows this article.

The Stalinist-inspired theory that homosexuality is a product of a transitory period of history (class society) I attempted to refute in my discussion of Wilhelm Reich ("Gay Liberation and Class Struggle," SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 2). This mystical and antiscientific theory, which I have never seen advanced with a shred of evidence, ought to be unceremoniously buried along with the rest of the antihomosexual garbage churned out in the name of science and Marxism during the past century. Certainly there can be no room for such a theory in the SWP's approach to gay liberation.

If there are any comrades who believe these or any other theories to the effect that homosexual behavior is not as natural and normal as heterosexual behavior, that it is a form of behavior that will disappear under a socialist society free of sexual restraints, they should present their arguments. The burden of proof, in my opinion, would lie with them. In any case, the existence of such sexist notions cannot be allowed to get in the way of the party's effort to develop a proper orientation to the gay liberation movement.

Why is an affirmative answer to this question necessary? Because it is a prerequisite for a correct grasp of the roots of homosexual oppression and the potential of the struggle against it, as well as for a correct political intervention into the gay liberation movement.

Even if gay people are viewed as social misfits, pathological perverts, or aberrations of class society, our judgment is suspended on the matter, their struggle for equal rights could still be supported on the basis that for instance, they are helping to stir things up and challenge the prevailing standards of capitalist society. But such an approach would hardly lead the revolutionary party to embrace, champion, and aggressively intervene in that struggle. On the contrary, it would logically result in attributing a rather low priority to the struggle. In addition, it would stunt the necessary task of developing a theory of homosexual liberation and sexual revolution, and it would cripple any effort to intervene in that struggle with a socialist analysis of homosexual oppression and program for gay liberation.

If, on the other hand, the struggle for gay liberation is understood to be not merely the struggle of a presently constituted behavioral minority ("gay people") against discrimination, but a struggle for a society in which the natural homosexual impulses of the human animal can once again be expressed without the constraining exclusively heterosexual norms of patriarchal society, then both the character of the gay liberation struggle and its importance to the tasks of the revolutionary party will be seen in a qualitatively different light.

A materialist approach to the struggle for gay liberation must view it as a struggle for the freedom of expression of homosexual behavior, not simply as a struggle of "gay people" for their rights. The "gay people" concept is altogether too static and reflects the heterosexual myth that homosexually oriented people are some kind of special, separate variety of human being. It also reflects a failure to grasp the dynamic and revolutionary potential of the struggle to regain humanity's freedom of sexual expression, including the freedom to engage in homosexual behavior. It falls far short of a proper appreciation of what gay liberation is all about and would place severe limitations on our ability to intervene in the gay liberation movement.

This somewhat static view of gay liberation and the failure to see that homosexual oppression is not merely the oppression of "homosexuals" or "gay people," but the result of an attempt by patriarchal society to suppress homosexual behavior in all members of society runs through Barry Sheppard's contribution to the discussion ("Concerning the Gay Liberation Movement and the Party's Orientation to It," SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 1). He states this precisely when he proposes "leaving aside all discussion about why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality, which need not concern us in trying to understand the nature of the oppression of gay people. . . ." Yet if a proper understanding of homosexual oppression and liberation is to be achieved, such a discussion does indeed concern us. It cannot be "left aside." If we were to leave aside the question of the normality of "homosexual impulses" and fail to plant our feet solidly on the concept that gay is good, the nature of our intervention into the gay liberation movement would be adversely affected. Let me illustrate this point with a couple of examples.

1) A refusal to recognize that homosexual behavior is a natural part of human sexual potential would make impossible any positive approach to homosexuality in our press or by party spokespersons. It would place such comrades—including those in gay liberation organizations—in the awkward and absurd position of having to withhold judgment on an issue that is central to the gay liberation struggle or of having (in the style of the old SDS) to preface any analysis of the matter with the qualifier that they were speaking for themselves, not the party. Such comrades would be hooted off the stage by any self-respecting gay audience.

2) Were the party to fail to recognize the naturalness and normality of homosexual behavior, it would be in no position to educate either its own ranks or the gay liberation movement on the relationship between the struggle against homosexual oppression and the coming socialist revolution. Indeed, such a failure would imply an abdication of the responsibility to develop a theory of homosexual liberation—a task that only Marxists can carry through. Even such an obviously necessary task

as publishing a pamphlet explaining why Marxists support gay liberation and why gays should be Marxists would become impossible without a correct position on this question.

The practical effect of refusing to take a stand on this question would be to limit the party's relationship to and intervention in the gay liberation movement to sporadic involvement. Such a refusal would lead to a low priority being assigned to party intervention in gay liberation at the present time and to a suspension of judgment entirely on the overall potential and importance of gay liberation for the socialist revolution. (If one cannot be sure that homosexuality is normal, one can hardly be sure that the struggle for homosexual liberation has any more than a passing, and peripheral relation to the struggle for socialism. Such doubts do not constitute a basis for a serious intervention into the gay movement.)

The net effect of refusing to take a stand on this question would be to restrict the party's intervention into the gay liberation movement to one of essentially supporting what the movement is doing (through news articles in *The Militant*, and perhaps even assigning some cadres where this did not conflict with party work in other areas with higher priority) rather than aggressively intervening with a revolutionary-socialist program for gay liberation and socialism with an aim of educating and providing leadership (both on an organizational and political level) for that movement, as well as of recruiting the best gay liberationists to the revolutionary party. Such a restriction would be consistent with the logic of "leaving aside" any discussion of, or failing to reach the correct agreement on, the central, underlying issue of the gay liberation movement: The equality of homosexuality with heterosexuality on every level and the contemptuous rejection of any position that falls short of recognizing this.

Such a restricted intervention would also appear to be consistent with both the cautious tone and altogether vague outline presented in Barry Sheppard's article initiating this literary discussion. Indeed, such a restricted intervention would appear to logically flow from his determination to avoid the question of "why homosexual impulses exist." (The very fact that he phrases the question in this manner suggests that he harbors doubts as to the normality of homosexuality that he does not harbor in the case of heterosexual impulses [Why do heterosexual impulses exist?]) If he does not, then why does he avoid this question? What, besides greater confusion, is gained by skirting it?) I have attempted to show that a proper intervention into the gay liberation movement will be impossible without confronting it head-on.

I shall take up the question of the nature of a proper SWP intervention into gay liberation shortly.

Should the SWP Intervene in Gay Liberation?

The answer to this question must be an unequivocal "Yes" for the following reasons.

1) Potentially very large numbers of persons can be mobilized in anticapitalist struggle by the gay liberation struggle. There are some twenty million homosexually oriented people in the United States. The new, but still small, gay liberation movement has already provided them with an unexpected hope for a world without discrimination and persecution on the basis of sexual orientation. We, above all, can and must show them how to

make this hope a reality. This is a task for which we are better qualified than anyone else.

2) Without intervening, we cannot hope to recruit conscious gays to the party. We must be able to offer the gay liberation movement more than general support for its struggles for gay rights or statements by our candidates in support of gay rights. To have a credible approach to precisely the serious kind of gay activist whom we should want to recruit, we will have to go beyond our present policy of nonintervention or the wait-and-see, low-profile kind of intervention suggested by Barry Sheppard.

3) The gay liberation movement confronts the revolutionary Marxist movement with a unique challenge. Never before has the Marxist movement seriously attempted to explain the links between the struggle against gay oppression and the class struggle, nor has it attempted to integrate the struggle for gay liberation into the struggle for socialism. In other words, the challenge facing it is one of developing a theory of homosexual liberation. This is a challenge we must accept.

4) Homosexual behavior is suppressed and gays are oppressed in ways that serve to buttress the antihuman values and institutions of patriarchal class society. The struggle against such oppression is one that it is in the interests of the revolutionary movement to advance. This question has been dealt with elsewhere in this discussion, notably in my article "Gay Liberation and Class Struggle" (SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 2).

5) Our intervention in gay liberation would provide us with a useful club against our opponents, none of whom—with the somewhat sporadic now-you-see-it-now-you-don't exception of International Socialists—are involved in gay liberation. Our intervention would be most useful in fighting our major opponent—Stalinism—whose line on homosexuality has not altered a bit since Stalin branded it a product of bourgeois decadence and began to purge gays from all areas of Soviet life, including the party, in 1933-1934. The very absence of most of our opponents from this field of struggle would, of course, in some ways offer us a wide-open field.

We should not hesitate to utilize an aggressive intervention into the gay liberation movement as a weapon in our fight to gain hegemony over the current radicalization and the American left.

6) Our task of constructing a revolutionary vanguard party at the head of the working masses and of all mass sectors struggling against capitalism would be damaged if we were not to intervene in this movement. Not only would we then have to explain to gay liberationists why the revolutionary socialist movement considers the struggle peripheral or incidental to the struggle to overthrow capitalism, but we would also have to explain why an intervention into gay liberation is not consistent with our own analysis of the current youth radicalization. Neither explanation would be persuasive.

7) We have a duty not only to our own movement but to the Fourth International to take a correct, interventionist approach toward this movement. Gay liberation is a rapidly growing international phenomenon. Gay groups exist in many countries where the Fourth International has sections or sympathizing groups. Some—as, for instance, FUORI (Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano) in Italy, and a group of Latin American gays living in New York, who publish a Spanish-language magazine called *Afuera*—are putting out very

attractive and radical-oriented publications.

Some steps have already been taken toward international coordination between gay liberation organizations. In September, for instance, a gathering of some two dozen European gay groups is scheduled to occur at Aarhus University in Denmark to discuss future international cooperation.

Discussion—not always correct—on gay liberation has begun to find its way into the press of several Trotskyist groups besides the SWP, among them those in Canada, France, New Zealand, and Australia. In Canada a discussion on gay liberation similar to our own is now being conducted.

The SWP, in my opinion, has a crucial role to play in bringing the world Trotskyist movement to a correct appreciation of homosexual oppression and liberation and how they relate to the present and future tasks of the international Marxist movement. This will not be an easy role to fulfill, but while difficult, it is not impossible, and it is necessary.

How Should the SWP Intervene in Gay Liberation?

I think Steve Beren provides a very good general outline of the kind of intervention the party should undertake at the end of his article "For National Party Intervention in the Gay Liberation Movement" (SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 5). He proposes essentially the following: the assignment of comrades to gay work in each branch; the assignment of comrades to intervene in (whether by joining or by collaborating with) gay groups existing in their area, especially on campuses, and the initiation of actions around specific issues where openings exist; fractional intervention at local and national gay conferences with not only our ideas on other movements and on socialism, but also with our ideas on building the gay liberation movement; increased efforts to build gay contingents in antiwar and abortion demonstrations; an aggressive propaganda campaign in our press and publications, through our forums, and in our election campaigns; internal party educational programs on gay liberation touching on the origins of homosexual oppression, the relationship of the gay movement to the rest of the radicalization, etc.

I would like to add to and elaborate upon these proposals.

If the gay movement is ever to develop into a veritable mass movement, that is, if it is ever to fully realize its potential, society's right to victimize, persecute, and imprison gay people must be taken away. So long as gays can lose their jobs or their apartments for being gay, and so long as they have no legal way of fighting back, a relatively small number of them can be expected to come out publicly as homosexuals. For it is still occupational suicide for the overwhelming majority of gays to come out.

And yet, you cannot build a mass gay movement unless gays have the choice of whether or not to come out; and as long as the present antigay laws exist, and as long as equal rights guarantees are not applied to homosexually oriented persons, large masses of homosexuals cannot be expected to do so. Winning this right to come out (to be who we are and to stop masquerading as heterosexuals in order to survive) seems to me to be the first major task of the gay liberation movement.

Concretely, this means fighting to abolish the antigay

laws; to get city councils to adopt policies banning discrimination against persons because of sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations; and to have the Equal Rights Amendment—once it is ratified by the state legislatures—extended to include homosexually oriented persons.

Such fights can be won and would gain the support of the overwhelming majority of gays, I believe. Certainly, achieving such victories will not eliminate patriarchal society's built-in need for gay oppression. But in the course of fighting for such preliminary goals, the gay movement will gain not only in numbers, but in combat experience and political understanding. And, until such goals are achieved, that is, until homosexually oriented person can come out without danger of losing their lives or their livelihood, the full potential and "weight" of the gay liberation movement in the coming transformation of society cannot be felt.

But most of these gays will not come out simply in response to exhortations from gay activists who already have. They must see coming out as a realistic proposition, not as a suicide mission. The gay liberation movement must not only chant "Out of the closets and into the streets!"; it must develop a strategy for placing the alternative to hiding within the reach of the millions of gays who identify with the gay movement but are still afraid or unable to join it.

This is a task that we must help carry out, and it can only be done by getting involved in the gay liberation movement. It does not merely "remain to be seen" how extensively gays will be mobilized in struggles for their rights, as Barry Sheppard states; what remains is for us to begin applying to the gay liberation struggle the historic knowledge and experience of the revolutionary movement. Both the gay movement and our own movement will benefit from such a decision.

Through our intervention in gay organizations, we should propagandize for and help organize coalitions to abolish the antigay laws (sodomy, cross dressing, solicitation, impersonation . . .) and to struggle for the adoption of equal rights legislation by city councils (and eventually by the U.S. Congress, when the Equal Rights Amendment is ratified) prohibiting discrimination against persons in employment, housing, and public accommodations because of their sexual orientation. We should begin to educate the movement to the necessity of eventually forming a national coalition along these lines. Eliminating such laws and winning equal rights for gays, are, it seems to me, a related, priority task for the gay liberation movement. It is a task that we should take the lead in expalining and, where action along these lines has already been undertaken by the movement (New York, California. . .), we should get involved and work toward the success of such struggles.

One such struggle is currently going on in New York, where the city council still has before its Committee on General Welfare the bill Intro 475, which would ban discrimination against gays in employment, housing, and public accommodations. It has received a great deal of support, including that of the executive council of District Council 37 of AFSCME (whose president, Victor Gotbaum, personally appeared in public hearings to testify in support of the bill), a number of legislators and congress-people, and, belatedly and under pressure from gay activists, Mayor Lindsay.

If this bill is defeated for good, it will be an important setback for gay liberation not only in New York City, but throughout the entire country.

Our movement has done very little to support this struggle—certainly far less than it can or ought to do. Essentially, our support has amounted to peridodic news reports in *The Militant*. Important though these are, we could have done more. We sent no representative of our election campaign to testify at the public hearings, for instance, nor did we even distribute a statement of support at the hearings—both of which would have been possible even with our current position of nonintervention in gay liberation. To relate properly to this and other similar struggles, however, we will have to be directly involved in gay liberation.

If we were intervening in gay liberation, our comrades would be able to join groups like GAA and campus gay groups and argue for our approach on how best to fight for such measures as Intro 475. Were we to join GAA, for instance, we would be active in the committees of the organization where we could be most effective, including the committee in charge of the struggle for Intro 475. As activists in gay liberation, we would be in a position to present our ideas, our proposals, and our criticisms, both in committees and in membership meetings, with an authority we will never acquire as observers of gay liberation. Even where our proposals were opposed by the reformist-minded leadership of the organization or where we might be defeated in votes of the membership, we would stand to make considerable gains for our movement as socialists committed to gay liberation.

Among the things we would probably have wanted to do around Intro 475 as members of GAA are the following, in addition, of course, to covering the struggle in *The Militant*: write articles outlining our strategy for GAA's newsletter, *Gay Activist*; emphasize the need for mass demonstrations and not reliance on negotiations with public officials (the reformist leadership tends to view mass demonstrations as a last resort, and it never takes the task of building them as seriously as we do); take part in the GAA speakers' bureau; help organize an aggressive press and public relations campaign; propose that GAA publish an educational pamphlet or brochure on the issues in the struggle; use the endorsement of District Council 37 of AFSCME to attempt to get GAA representatives to address union meetings and to press other unions to come out in support of the bill, which would, after all, help provide job protection for many of their own members and potential members (among the non-unionized); propose some kind of coalition for homosexual rights to back the campaign, with the coalition to include both gay and sympathizing straight groups.

Most of these steps could also be taken by comrades belonging to other gay groups in New York City, such as groups on campus.

The GAA leadership's tendency to rely on negotiations with politicians has failed to galvanize New York's gay community in a true mobilization around Intro 475 (not to mention the sympathizing straight community, which is not small). Our intervention into gay liberation might very well have been able to alter that state of affairs somewhat. In any case, further abstention from struggles such as these is, in my opinion, beneficial neither to our own movement nor to the cause of gay liberation.

While I believe an important focus of our intervention

into gay liberation should be the elimination of the existing antigay laws and the adoption of equal rights legislation for gays, our intervention should not be limited to these issues. Obviously, we should be involved in other struggles of the gay movement as well, whether these be defense campaigns (such as the one at the University of Minnesota last fall, or the case of Morty Manford in New York this spring), gay pride marches, campus recognition battles, gay studies fights, job discrimination fights, protests against news media discrimination, police harassment, or what ever.

In addition to the activities and projects that have already been mentioned, I believe that we should take a serious educational and propagandistic approach to gay liberation. Useful elements of such an approach would, it seems to me, be the following:

- Teach-ins on sexual oppression and sexual liberation. A few years ago, the French antiwar movement staged huge teach-ins throughout France called "Six Hours for Vietnam." I think we should propose that the gay liberation movement do the same kind of thing today. The teach-ins could be sponsored by united front coalitions and could be called "Six Hours for Gay Liberation," or "Six Hours on Homosexuality" (or they could be given a broader scope and dubbed "Six Hours on Sexuality," or "Six Hours on Sexual Liberation," and the women's liberation movement could be involved). Such teach-ins could consist of films of gay liberation demonstrations (there are now a number of these films), of films dealing with the topic of homosexuality ("Portrait of Jason," for instance), short plays on gay themes (there are a growing number), gay entertainment, and speeches. Representatives of foreign gay groups and sexologists like Daniel Guerin could be invited to give the meeting an international flavor. Naturally, we should want to present our socialist analysis of gay oppression and gay liberation at such teach-ins (and should fight for our right to do so)—both as speakers and salespeople for Pathfinder Press titles on gay liberation (and other topics, to be sure).

A mass meeting on the subject of homosexuality and sex would draw a lot of people. It is a popular topic. I see no reason why such teach-ins, properly organized, could not draw hundreds and even thousands of people (including many closeted gays who would feel safe turning out for such an event of the gay liberation movement) in a place like New York City, for instance, or even on some campuses. It would be to our advantage to help organize and present a socialist analysis at such teach-ins. Yet I doubt that they will ever take place on the scale that is possible without our intervention.

- A publications program that includes gay liberation related topics in both pamphlet and book form. Many bourgeois publishers already have their "token" gay title—the profit instinct has led them to do this despite what they may think of the question on its own merits. In my opinion, it is unthinkable that Pathfinder Press should con-

tinue to be without any titles on gay liberation. This is not only politically wrong, but it is unfortunate from a financial point of view: gay liberation and homosexuality are subjects that sell. Sources for pamphlets could include some of the contributions to this discussion, some of the articles suggested below, etc.

On books, let me suggest one in particular that would be useful for us to translate and publish: Daniel Guerin's *Essai sur la révolution sexuelle* (Essay on Sexual Revolution). This book presents a theory of sexual revolution, basing itself essentially on Kinsey and Reich. In addition, it includes several short essays on Fourier, Shakespeare, Gide, and Proudhon, among others. This book was translated into Spanish about a year ago, but it has yet to be translated into English. I think it would make a positive addition to Pathfinder's catalogue.

- An active intervention in the gay liberation movement through *The Militant* and the *ISR*. We should regularly run feature and analytical articles, in addition to news articles, on topics relating to gay liberation. Among these should be reviews of books relevant to gay liberation, as well as articles on topics of which the following are only a few suggestions: the relationship between gay liberation and the class struggle; religion and the oppression of homosexuals; socialism and gay liberation; why Marxists support gay liberation and why gays should be Marxists; gay history and culture (including portraits of important gays in history, such as Walt Whitman, Magnus Hirschfeld, and the British Victorian socialist Edward Carpenter, who is destined someday to become a hero of gay liberation, etc.); feminism, lesbianism, and gay liberation; psychiatry as an instrument of gay oppression; Stalinism and antihomosexuality (taking up the degeneration of the Soviet revolution, the antigay witchhunt under Stalin, the decadence theory of homosexuality popularized by the Stalinists, and the potential for gay involvement in the political revolution in the degenerated workers states); a critique of the Cuban position on homosexuality; a history of the socialist movement and its relationship to the question of homosexual oppression and liberation; and a defense of our politics in the face of attacks in the gay press, of which there have been approximately a dozen during the past year that called for a reply, but which we have—incorrectly, I believe—ignored.

When Should the SWP Intervene in Gay Liberation?

One of the things that this discussion must make clear is that we support gay liberation not only in words but also in deeds, that we embrace the gay liberation struggle, and that we are determined to help build that struggle and integrate it into the overall struggle to overthrow capitalism. There is nothing to be gained, and plenty to lose, by waiting any longer before beginning to get involved in gay liberation. We must recognize the relationship between this struggle and the coming socialist revolution and begin to relate to it accordingly. The time to do so is now.

August 30, 1972

A STATEMENT TO THE PSYCHIATRIC
PROFESSION BY GAY LIBERATION

(Vol. 30, No. 8)

by David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

The American Psychiatric Association met in Dallas May 1-5. Representatives of the gay liberation movement were on hand with a gay information booth to attempt to inject a ray of rationalism and intelligence into the prevailing backwardness and pseudoscientific approach of an institution whose rabid antihomosexuality is backed up by medical titles, passed on to the American people as the authoritative word of the scientific community on homosexuality, and used to buttress bigoted attitudes toward gays and to justify the oppression of homosexually oriented persons. A leaflet was distributed to psychiatrists succinctly presenting the position of the gay liberation on this institution. The text of this leaflet, in part, follows (as published in the June 12 issue of *Gay*).

* * *

Central to the conflict between psychiatry and the homosexual community is the "sickness theory" of homosexuality and the whole related complex of negative attitudes toward homosexuality, which try to make of homosexuality something inferior to and less desirable than heterosexuality. It matters not whether the word used be sickness, disorder, affliction, disturbance, dysfunction, neurosis, immaturity, fixation, character or personality disorder, pathology, or any other—or whether homosexuality be considered as merely symptomatic of these—the effects are the same: 1) To support and buttress the prejudices of society and to assist the bigots in the perpetration and perpetuation of their bigotry; and, at least equally important 2) To destroy the homosexual's self-confidence and self-esteem, impair his or her self-image, degrade his or her basic human dignity.

Before any theory having consequences as disastrous as these is accepted, there should be certainty that it rests upon a sound scientific basis. As anyone with even a rudimentary scientific training is aware, the approach of psychiatry to homosexuality violates every canon of good scientific research. For psychiatry cavalierly to spout forth its characterizations of homosexuality as less than fully healthy represents utter irresponsibility. If the profession wishes to continue to take pride in its alleged scientific accomplishments, it had better be sure that its "researches" really are scientific. Insofar as homosexuality is concerned, they could not be less so. They are the distilled, concentrated essence of bad science; they are a textbook illustration of "science" gone wrong. When the psychiatric position on homosexuality is examined, we find that we have been DEFINED into sickness and pathology by cultural, social, moral, teleological and theological value judgments, camouflaged and cloaked in the language of science, but with none of the substance of science.

Deeply resented by the gay community are persistent efforts by psychiatrists to convert homosexuals to heterosexuality, instead of inculcating them with pride in their homosexuality. Increasingly, we hear psychiatrists piously

declare that they attempt to convert "only those homosexuals who wish to be changed." That is an unacceptably simplistic, superficial, and shallow approach. When society generally, and psychiatry particularly, have "brainwashed" homosexuals into a belief in the inferiority of their homosexuality, the homosexual who asks to be changed is merely the creation of a self-fulfilling process. How many whites choose to try to "pass" as Black, and why is the number so small, and why do any Blacks at all choose to "pass" as white, and is it not better that now in an era of "Black is Beautiful," fewer and fewer Blacks are trying to be untrue to themselves? We must investigate and often challenge the motives before we accept the desire to change. The great majority of homosexuals desiring to change to heterosexuality should be instilled with a belief that "Gay is Good," not blandly welcomed as candidates for change.

The homosexual community looks upon efforts to change homosexuals to heterosexuality, or to mold younger, supposedly malleable homosexuals into heterosexuality (the very existence of this "plastic teenager" is questionable at best) as an assault upon our people comparable in its way to genocide. We find offensive the entire vocabulary of the psychiatric literature, in which "help," "improvement," "success," "recovery" and similar terms relating to the therapy of homosexuals, is related to the extent of increase in heterosexual tendency and activity. The goals of therapy of homosexuals must be subjected to searching re-examination.

Not only do we insist that homosexuals, as people, are in no way inferior to heterosexuals as people (a precept to which we are sure that most psychiatrists will take no exception) but we insist, equally uncompromisingly, that homosexuality—as a condition, a state of being, a way of life or lifestyle, an expression of love and affection—is fully on par with and in no slightest way inferior to heterosexuality.

We are working to create a sense of community among our people, to create, in turn, a sense of unity, solidarity, militancy, and activism, in order to assist us to achieve our full rights and status in a society which is ours as much as it is that of the heterosexuals. We are working with success to create among our people a sense of *pride* in their homosexuality and a sense of the rightness of what they are and the goodness of what they do.

In order to do this, it is necessary to extract homosexuality from the medical context in which it has long and persistently been placed, and to place it in a *sociological* context of minority group relationships involving prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry. This is the *only* context in which the real problems of real homosexuals in our society today will be constructively and productively addressed. It has been well and truly said that in our society there is no Black problem, there is a white problem. We say that there is no homosexual problem, there is a heterosexual problem. Psychiatry, as it presently

deals with homosexuality, is a major part of that problem.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

1. Both individually, and collectively as a profession and an Association, re-examine your past positions on homosexuality. Discard the negative attitudes and the biases which have afflicted you in the past.

2. Work for a public renunciation, by psychiatry, of the "sickness theory" of homosexuality in ANY semantic guise.

3. Undertake an active, vigorous campaign to ameliorate and ultimately to eliminate popular prejudice on this question, both through work to change attitudes and in such specific areas as law reform, equal opportunity legislation, etc.

4. Consult on an on-going basis with representatives of the homosexual community.

August 30, 1972

A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON AN IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THIS DISCUSSION

(Vol. 30, No. 8)

By Steve Beren, Chicago Branch

In my first contribution to this discussion, I discussed the question "is gay good?" (Vol. 30, No. 5, pp. 8-9) I did so, not because I wanted the party to put its stamp of approval on homosexuality, but because I consider it a relevant political issue.

I don't propose that the party take a yes-or-no vote on "is gay good?" But I do think that a correct political approach to this question is important in understanding the concept of gay pride.

The Wrong Kind of Questions

But some heterosexuals resist the notion that gay is good. They ask: "But how can you just say that gay is good? Where is your definitive proof?" The proof exists, but that is hardly the point.

A friend of mine, who has never believed in God, as a youth always considered himself only an agnostic because he felt he had no way of "proving" that God did not exist. Then, one day, he realized that the burden of proof belonged to those who insisted there was a God. Since then, he has considered himself an atheist.

Similarly, the burden of proof lies with those who say gay is not good. Those straights who ask, "But what causes homosexuality? It is perhaps an illness? Or some other threat to our society? Where is your proof?" etc., are asking the wrong kind of questions.

In their introduction to *Twenty Questions About Homosexuality: A Political Primer*, the Gay Activists Alliance of New York states:

"It is important for our heterosexual brothers and sisters to understand that most of the questions they ask themselves offend and oppress us, for they are not asked of other groups (in) our society, and they have little to do with our lives since they are based entirely on misinformation and myth. But these myths have often been used as excuses for the denial of our Constitutional and human rights. So—despite the fact that our lives need no justification—we are compelled to provide answers.

"One major source is our own experience. We know that

we are neither criminal, immoral nor sick. But we have also used the bulk of the most recent literature on homosexuality; objective information which proves our point. . . ."

Refuting the anti-homosexual mythology of class society is not only important because it is a question of scientific fact, but also as a directly political question because of the concrete social effects of anti-gay prejudice.

A Correct Political Approach

Question 20 in GAA's pamphlet asks: "Is it better, in this society, to be heterosexual?" And GAA replies:

"Is it better to be white? Or gentile? Or descended from the settlers on the Mayflower? These are questions that should never be asked seriously by anyone who believes in our Constitutional principles. But they are asked nonetheless, and members of our oppressed ethnic minorities once wondered whether it wouldn't be better to 'pass' if possible, or at least try as hard as they could to fit into the prescribed patterns. Now these minorities have come to understand that the only answer is to be exactly what you are and proud of it—that avoidance of insanity does not consist in conformity but in protest against injustice.

"Homosexuals too now realize that our first duty toward ourselves is to accept nothing less than the same rights and dignities accorded others. We are no longer willing to accept the tyranny of the majority and we see the efforts to describe us a 'criminal' or 'immoral' or 'sick' for what these efforts always have been, *political* maneuvers aimed at stripping us of our personal values, at constricting the human personality and at substituting conformity for social diversity. We are serving notice that we'll tolerate no more brainwashing or brutalization. . . ." (their emphasis)

This political approach to the question "is gay good?" is essentially correct and should be the approach of the Socialist Workers Party.

August 30, 1972

A CIVIL LIBERTIES APPROACH TO GAY
LIBERATION IS INSUFFICIENT

(Vol. 30, No. 9)

by Harry Ring, Los Angeles Branch

This article is intended to state my point of view in relation to the gay liberation movement. It is not intended as a "contribution" to the discussion in the sense of offering any significant analysis of the basic issues involved. The impending August 31 discussion deadline and—much more decisive—a very limited knowledge of many of the questions being posed, preclude this.

* * *

If the article by Comrade Barry Sheppard in Bulletin No. 1, June 1972, were to be regarded, so to speak, as introductory remarks initiating the discussion, it could perhaps be accepted as sufficient. If, however, it is intended as the outline of a position to be approved by a coming plenum or convention I think it must be characterized as insufficient.

The article might suffice as the outline of a position if the party should decide on a very limited perspective in relation to the gay liberation movement—i.e., support of civil liberties for homosexuals and participation in the gay liberation movement on a local level around such issues.

But I do not think we can or should limit our perspective in this way.

(In this regard, I think the response to Comrade Sheppard's article by Comrade David Keepnews in Bulletin No. 4, July 1972, makes a number of cogent points about the present scope of the gay movement, the political opportunities effective intervention affords, and why Comrade Sheppard's proposal is insufficient for this.)

I believe that the development of an effective intervention in the gay movement is contingent on an adequate party discussion of the question. Such a discussion is needed to clarify several key questions and to resolve the differences that exist with those in the party who oppose an orientation toward the gay liberation movement.

Comrade Sheppard is, in my opinion, unrealistic in contending that trying to understand the nature of gay oppression we can put aside "all discussion about why homosexual impulses exist, or why a section of the population prefers homosexuality."

It would be utopian and counterproductive to demand that the party acquire a full, rounded grasp of a profoundly complex subject about which there is only an extremely limited body of valid scientific information. I do not think we must answer all the basic questions involved as a precondition for a positive approach.

But there are certain essentials which I am convinced cannot be avoided if we are to intervene effectively in the gay movement.

I don't think that politically conscious gay activists will be particularly impressed by a political position which is limited to support of their civil liberties.

Rather, I believe, we must have a position of support for gay rights within the context of clearly rejecting the

nonmaterialist notion that homosexuality is an illness—an illness induced by class society which will be cured by socialism.

There are many individuals and groups that regard homosexuality as an illness but oppose oppression of gay people in much the same sense that they oppose the oppressive conditions that prevail in mental hospitals as well as the virulent prejudice against the mentally ill.

But the gay liberation movement is predicated on a concept far more basic than the demand for civil liberties. The very essence—and profound significance—of the development of the movement is precisely a rejection of the notion that homosexuality is an illness. Some contend that gay is better, but all are agreed that gay is good. They have emerged from the closet to fight for their liberation because they have finally come to recognize that the terrible oppression they suffer is as unjustified as it is unjust. They have taken a position that every political tendency will be compelled to relate to, one way or the other.

In their fight for civil rights, politically thoughtful gay people will accept the support of all those that offer it, without regard to motivation. But in terms of being politically influenced by those who may support their rights, it's unlikely that they will be seriously impressed by any but those who reject and oppose the notion that they are ill.

Nor do I think it requires major research to rebut the prejudice-laden view that homosexuality is an illness. It is difficult for me to conceive how a materialist can characterize as "unnatural" a phenomena that appears in human-kind and animals; in every known period of human history; in all forms of societies; and flourishes so readily in conditions of sexual segregation such as prisons, armies, schools, etc.

I would not venture to predict what the course or tempo of development of the gay movement will be. I think it is fairly apparent that it is in only a formative stage and that it will advance significantly. I think that already it has demonstrated a social and political import that can only be welcomed by revolutionaries.

Revolutionaries respond positively to any group in society that rebels against the particular oppression visited upon it. And when an absolutely unprecedented challenge is hurled against one of this society's deepest bodies of reactionary prejudice, the progressive connotations should be evident.

I have no prescription as to the extent or nature of our intervention in the gay movement, except perhaps to commit myself as an unqualified supporter of a balanced approach to all questions. Clearly we must utilize the yardstick indicated by Comrade Sheppard—weighing opportunities, available forces, other political priorities, etc. But I don't think this can happen in a meaningful way, even on a branch-by-branch basis, unless we have clarity on the essential political aspects of gay liberation and national direction for the work.

Nor do I think there can be effective intervention, even on a local basis, unless this is adequately reflected in our press and unless we assume the responsibility to begin developing a minimal body of literature on the question.

It would be politically inadequate for *The Militant* to restrict itself to reporting on, and supporting, specific actions around civil liberties issues. Yet, if I read it correctly, that would in fact be the limit if Comrade Sheppard's article were to be, so to speak, the party position.

On the other hand, it would be entirely valid to argue that a more rounded treatment of the question in the press should await resolution of differences within the party. But then we must address ourselves to such differences and not put them aside.

I think we must address ourselves to the viewpoint advanced within the national committee that intervention in the gay movement constitutes a diversion from our main political tasks and which characterizes that movement as a narrow sectarian cause without genuine revolutionary potential. (Let me emphasize that I do not consider Comrade Sheppard's article in any sense supportive of this view.)

Similarly, we need an educational discussion that would equip every comrade to rebut the kind of utterly false argumentation found in Comrade Nat Weinstein's contribution in Bulletin No. 4, July 1972. Frankly, I believe that when a serious comrade can simply dismiss the reality of gay oppression with the quibbling assertion that it is merely "psychological oppression," we have evidence of the fact that antihomosexual prejudice runs so very deep in this society that it even manifests itself within society's most conscious vanguard. (And I can't help but commenting that the New York city official who beat and stomped a gay demonstrator and went unpunished was no doubt waging "psychological warfare.")

About the only thing I could agree with in Comrade Weinstein's article was his concluding generality, albeit my agreement stems from an opposite point of view.

By drawing "all the correct lessons" from the developments relating to the gay liberation movement and our discussion of it, Comrade Weinstein advises, "we can give a new dimension to the understanding of the younger comrades in what a class approach to politics is all about."

Apropos of the arguments advanced by Comrade Weinstein and others that intervention in the gay movement would constitute a diversion from our working-class perspective, I would urge study of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done*, in which he squarely counterposed "Social Democratic politics" to "trade union politics."

In that work Lenin argued vehemently that those who did not relate to all struggles against oppression were not discharging their responsibilities as revolutionists.

Permit me a few quotations:

"Working class consciousness cannot be genuinely political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected."

"Those who concentrate the attention, observation and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone, are not Social Democrats . . ."

"The Social Democrat's ideal should not be a trade union secretary but a *tribune of the people* able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it takes place, no matter what stratum or class of people it affects. . . ."

" . . . for he who forgets that 'the Communists support every revolutionary movement' . . . is not a Social Democrat. He who forgets his obligation to *be in advance of everybody* in bringing up, sharpening and solving every general democratic question, is not a Social Democrat." (All emphasis in original.)

In political argumentation, it has been observed, there is often a "good" reason and a real one. I don't think the arguments advanced against a positive orientation toward the gay movement are even very "good" ones. And I don't feel I would be going too far afield in speculating that the real reason for such opposition is fear that identification with the gay movement and significant recruitment of gay would impair our image among workers—straight ones, that is.

The problem is not totally illusory even if the fear is exaggerated. But I think the only way we can hope to deal effectively with the problem of antigay prejudice among workers and others is by first divesting ourselves of that same prejudice.

August 30, 1972

OUR INTERVENTION

(Vol. 30, No. 9)

by John Lauritsen, Upper West Side
Branch, New York Local

Quality Of The Present Discussion

I have been most impressed by the quality of contributions to the present discussion. The articles (chronological order) by Sudie and Geb, David Thorstad, Jon Hillson, David Keepnews, Kendall Green, Steve Beren, and Michael Maggi show what Marxism is all about—comprehension of the living class struggle with a passionate commitment to changing the world.

There are differences among the pro-intervention contributions; for that matter, formulations in my own articles with which I am not now satisfied. But on the whole, especially considering the difficulty of communication, carrying on as we are dialogue through the medium of sporadic and dilatory bulletins, the myriad aspects of gay liberation have been intelligently covered, from difficult areas of consciousness and philosophy to practical aspects of an inter-

vention. No other movement but ours could have produced such a discussion in the space of three short months. The intelligentsia of the world Stalinist movement are still bound to infantile and reactionary banalities on the subject of homosexuality. Our small movement has applied the philosophy of Marxism to an area for which, though there were some socialist precedents (Edward Carpenter, the Bolsheviks, Kurt Hiller), an extensive socialist analysis has never been attempted.

It is correct that this discussion has concentrated heavily on developing historical-materialist theory on sexuality, its repression, and its role in the class-domination scheme of things. Marxism is nothing if it is not the insistence that *theory is an absolutely necessary guide to action*.

Some comrades have expressed the feeling that most of this discussion has been wide of the mark in that it did not focus essentially or even entirely on down to earth, "party building" aspects of an intervention, presumably answering such questions as: "What do we do?" and "What does it have to offer us?" Yes, these questions ought to be answered, and I think that they have been. But to imagine that these "objective" issues should be the only focus of this discussion is the antithesis of Marxism.

If Karl Marx had felt that only what-do-we-do questions were worth addressing himself to, he would never have written *Capital*, *The German Ideology*, *The Paris Manuscripts*, or more than a few hundred words of *The Communist Manifesto*.

Correct theory is crucial to the success of the socialist movement and, as Lenin pointed out, it doesn't even hurt once in a while to dream.

Grasping At Straws

The arguments thus far presented against a vigorous intervention into gay liberation—that gays are not really oppressed, that no economic factor is involved, that gay liberation is not *per se* revolutionary, not in the center of the struggle for socialism, only a life-style issue, etc.—have in my opinion been amply refuted in this discussion. I recommend that comrades not only read but re-read all the contributions of this most exciting discussion.

So far as I can tell, the last refuge of the anti-interventionists seems to be the question of priorities, with a concern for the allocation of scarce resources. The "allocation of scarce resources" argument has been presented in one form or another by Barry Sheppard ("our own small forces"), Lee Smith ("... the allocation of our resources and energies vis-a-vis the gay liberation movement"), Fred Feldmen ("We must determine where our small forces should be concentrated") and Wesley Weinhold ("... our allocation of limited resources").

At the same time that I recognize this as a necessary concern for our small movement, I find it highly ironic that the emphasis on the "allocation of scarce resources" is one of the most characteristically bourgeois features of bourgeois economics. Paul Sweezy in his *Theory Of Capitalist Development* presents Professor Lionel Robbins as a typical representative of bourgeois economics, and quotes Robbins' definition of economics: "Economics is the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between ends and scarce means which have alternative uses." Now, what is bourgeois about Robbins' definition is that it effectively leads away from all interhuman relationships, political and historical, in favor of a reified and classless viewpoint.

In the same way, an undue concentration on the allocation of our own resources may lead us away from appreciating the depth and significance of gay liberation and our revolutionary obligations towards it.

Gay liberation work in our movement deserves sufficient priority that it will not be shunted aside for every leafletting, paste-up, sales or whatever expedition might lay claim to our limited resources.

Intervention As Socialists

We should intervene nationally in gay liberation—that is, with a national strategy with clear guidelines, national coordination, and appropriate use of our press.

National intervention should not, however, be construed as meaning anything like a WONAAC or SMC single-issue coalition. Helping to build such a coalition would not only be unrealistic but impossible for us at this time because we have not sufficient cadre, we have no roots in the gay liberation movement, and we have been subjected to an extensive slander campaign that we've made no effort to counteract. Helping to build such a coalition may be possible in the future, but not now.

The interventions we can realistically carry out now have been elaborated by a number of comrades. I won't repeat what they have said, but merely wish to emphasize that a part of our intervention should be as people with socialist ideas.

A prominent feature of the gay liberation movement has become numerous national and regional conferences. Typically such conferences hold workshops on a variety of topics, from political perspectives and organizing techniques to the mysticism of gay Christianity or consciousness raising. In addition to other forms of intervention at such conferences—sales, antiwar, campaign, etc.—there will be opportunities for us to present socialist ideas on gay liberation, either by holding our own workshops or intervening aggressively in other workshops. As people with a long view of history, with a philosophy and method of analysis, we have a lot to say on such topics: religion, the Stalinist counterrevolution and the persecution of gays, McGovern and the Democratic Party, the family, etc. Some people will want to hear our full socialist program. Of course many factors influence how we would handle a particular conference, including its format and the qualifications of our available cadre, but when opportunities permit we shouldn't hesitate to come on as Marxists.

Again, the importance of theory should be apparent. We must convince the most advanced people that gay liberation is part of the class struggle, that a working-class victory is necessary for a truly free and human society.

Our Press

Our press should not be limited to mere news coverage of gay liberation. The *ISR* should publish theoretical articles, and *The Militant* should analyze developments in the gay liberation movement as well as print critical reviews of such books as Arno Karlen's *Sexuality And Homosexuality*. David Thorstad's review was not the one I'd have written (to me the outstanding feature of Karlen's book was its lies and distortions on every topic covered), but I think his review was valid and ought to have been published (see "A Review and a Comment," Vol. 30 No. 5).

Most important, we must get out some pamphlets on gay liberation. Here, the argument of "scarce resources" applies not at all. In a short time we could have out many excellent pamphlets which would make money for Pathfinder and gain a reputation for us as the people with the best ideas.

The following are suggestions for pamphlets:

- 1) *Gay Is Good: An Anthropological Perspective*. This should present the scientific evidence that homosexual behavior is completely natural in the greater human perspective, drawing upon anthropological, historical, zoological, and statistical evidence. The Marxist viewpoint rejecting moral absolutes and mysticism should be clear.
- 2) *Religion: Its Role In The Persecution Of Gay People*. Judeo-Christianity as the source of anti-gay prejudice and persecution. The history of Christian atrocities. A general Marxist view of religion could be presented along the lines of Comrade Edwards' pamphlet, *Christianity And Marxism*. I know this pamphlet will sell, as I sold six copies of Edwards' pamphlet at the Rutgers gay liberation conference in about 5 minutes!
- 3) Kurt Hiller's *Appeal* to the 2nd International Congress For Sexual Reform, Copenhagen 1928, which I translated from German and which was published in the May 1971 *ISR*. This speech has considerable historic interest and is excellent in its own right. Though Hiller didn't know it, it is a polemic against Stalinism. We should provide an introduction for it summarizing generally *The Revolution Betrayed*, linking the crushing of the Left Opposition and the exile of Trotsky with the development of Stalinist anti-gay practices, and clearly distinguishing socialists from the betrayers of socialism.
- 4) *Homosexual Freedom—From Bolshevism To Stalinism*. This would expand on the section in my contribution (Vol. 30, No. 1). This is an important part of our history as well as that of the homosexual emancipation

movement. Gay liberationists must become aware of it. Most gay people, like most straights, think the Soviet Union represents socialism, which is therefore bad. We must correct this.

5) *Edward Carpenter—Grandfather Of Gay Liberation*. The 19th century socialist, Edward Carpenter, is considered by some to have been the first gay liberationist. His book, *Love's Coming Of Age*, dealt with women's emancipation, Engels' theories on the family, "the intermediate sex," and presented a vision of love in a free society. Just as it was due to be published in 1895, the Oscar Wilde trial caused extreme reaction to set in, and his publisher broke contract. Six publishers refused to touch the book. Carpenter then turned to his own group whose Labour Press published *Love's Coming Of Age*. The first gay liberation book was published by a socialist press. I have a copy of the book published in 1927 by the Vanguard Press in New York. On the inside covers are the slogans: "Solidarity of Labour" and "The Cause of Labour is the Hope of the World." By this time the book had achieved extensive popularity and been translated into many languages. A biographical pamphlet on Carpenter will again establish the link between socialism and gay liberation. His is an interesting life.

6) *The Politics Of Gay Oppression*. This could incorporate aspects of Reich's and Marcuse's work to show how gay oppression supports class rule. Contributions by Jon Hillson, David Thorstad, myself and others have suggested ideas for this pamphlet.

7) *The Gay Heritage*. Covering great men and women who were gay. Just as the Black and women's movements did, we must recover our own history, our own heroes, of which we have much to be proud.

September 1, 1972

MEMORANDUM ON THE GAY LIBERATION MOVEMENT

(Vol. 31, No. 3)

[The general line of this memorandum was approved by the National Committee on April 29, 1973.]

The plenum of the National Committee held last year adopted a motion that read in part, "To open immediately following the plenum an internal party literary discussion, for a three-month period, of the gay liberation movement and the party's orientation to it, leading to a decision by the subsequent plenum of the National Committee." This is that subsequent plenum, and the purpose of this memorandum is to make that decision.

1. The struggle against the oppression of gay people is a struggle for democratic rights. The party has taken a position in support of this struggle, and adopted the following position at the 1971 party convention: "To reaffirm the party's position stated in the Political Committee motion of May 25, 1971, of unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights, including full civil and human rights, and against all the forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism." The adoption of the general line of this report will include reaffirming this as the basic political

position of the party on the oppression of homosexuals.

2. While we reject with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people, including quack psychological "theories" labelling gays as mentally ill—prejudices echoed by the Stalinists—the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality.

The party should not do this for the following reasons.

First, the party is a political organization. Its aim is a political one: to construct a mass revolutionary proletarian political party that will mobilize the working class and its allies, and lead in the conquest of state power by the working class, opening the road to the construction of socialism. In keeping with its aim, the party adopts political positions that guide its work. It does not take positions on a whole range of scientific, artistic, cultural and other questions—to do so would cut across its purpose, dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another

scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and
apple its ability to mobilize the masses on political ques-
ons.

Second, this particular question is further complicated
by the fact that the whole question of the scientific in-
vestigation of sexuality and the related one of psychology
is still in its infancy. Especially concerning homosexuality,
little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is ob-
jectively based and what represents prejudice in what
knowledge is available. If we were to attempt to adopt
a particular viewpoint on the nature of homosexuality
or sexuality in general, we would become embroiled in
a hopeless tangle of opinions, prejudices and personal
preferences with little hope of reaching any scientifically
valid conclusions, even if that were within the purpose
of the SWP, which it is not.

Neither is scientific knowledge advanced enough on
this question for us to be able to say what future hu-
man sexuality will be like in a classless society. The so-
cialist revolution will lay the foundations for the trans-
formation of human culture in all spheres, including sex-
ual and other personal relations, but exactly how this
will affect sexual relations can only be a subject for spec-
ulation at this stage, as is true of a whole range of as-
pects of the future classless society. We can say that, in
sexual relations as in every other human sphere, we have
every reason to expect that future communist humanity
will be superior to present-day humanity, and that sex-
uality will be freed from all prejudice, superstition, mys-
ticism, and religious morality. We cannot go much be-
yond the assertion that the present sexual misery of the
masses of people will be overcome. If we attempt to ex-
trapolate further, we run the strong risk of merely pro-
jecting our own psychological makeups, losing sight of
the fact that each and every one of us has been formed
under capitalism.

1972 We should reject the idea, propounded by some in the
gay liberation movement, that homosexuality is more
progressive than heterosexuality because it involves sex-
ual relations that fall outside the family system, and there-
fore leads to liberation from that system. Sexual activities
of any kind outside the family—whether heterosexual
or homosexual—cannot replace the family system. They
in no way replace the social functions of caring for the
young and old, performing such labor as cooking, laun-
dry, etc. The reactionary institution of the patriarchal
family, and the ideology and morality that buttress it,
will wither away only in the process of the construction
of socialism, as the social and economic functions it now
performs are progressively taken on by society as a whole.

The party should take no position on the nature or
value of homosexuality, nor try to determine what is
"good" or "bad" about heterosexuality or homosexuality,
and not advocate any specific sexual orientation.

3. We cannot abstract our consideration of this ques-
tion from the rise of the gay liberation movement itself.
In fact, it has been the rise of this movement that has
made it necessary for the party to clarify its position
concerning the oppression of homosexuals, and to dis-
cuss our relationship to this movement.

The gay liberation movement is an aspect of the current
radicalization and developed out of it. There are a num-
ber of factors which prepared the way for the develop-
ment of this movement.

First, there have been changes in the prevailing atti-
tudes on homosexuality in society as a whole, together
with changes in prevailing views on sexuality in gen-
eral. While the prejudices against homosexuals remain,
and they are deep, an attitude of greater acceptance of
homosexuals as fully human has developed. At bottom,
this reflects a loosening of the hold of traditional sexual
morality that has accompanied the growing crisis of the
social mores of capitalism in its decline.

These changes towards lessening of prejudices concern-
ing homosexuals is evident in many ways, in the cul-
tural and information media, in the number of challenges
to various legal aspects of the discrimination against
gays, and even in statements by bourgeois candidates.

The development of greater acceptance of homosexuals
has been most pronounced among radicalized young peo-
ple. One aspect of the youth radicalization has been a
widespread and growing questioning of repressive sexual
morality. This critical attitude towards traditional mo-
rality undermines the ideological basis of the prejudice
and discrimination against gay people. This shift in at-
titudes has provided an atmosphere in which such a move-
ment could develop. At the same time, a layer of gay
people, especially young gay people, have been affected
by the radicalization. Seeing other oppressed layers and
groups begin to fight against their oppression, young
gay people were inspired to begin to struggle for their
rights too.

Under the impact of movements such as a Black lib-
eration struggle and the women's liberation movement,
radicalizing young people have begun to reject any dis-
crimination against people for their physical or sexual
characteristics. For many in this generation, opposition
to the traditional repressive sexual morality and to dis-
crimination based upon sexual characteristics is becoming
the norm. This trend among youth was reinforced by
the rise of the women's liberation movement.

The women's movement itself is concerned with sexual
oppression, as women are oppressed as a sex. The lit-
erature of the women's movement has analyzed and ex-
posed the objectification of sex and the debilitating and
reactionary character of traditional sexual morality, and
the distortion of sexuality in capitalist society. The Marx-
ist theory of the origin, structure and role of the family
as the basis of the oppression of women has, for example,
become much more widely accepted. In this context, many
in the women's movement have begun to see the prej-
udice towards homosexuals as another facet of sexist
oppression.

The women's movement not only helped pave the way
for the rise of the gay liberation movement on the plane
of ideas, it had to confront the question of the discrim-
ination against homosexuals directly in the form of les-
bian-baiting. This included baiting of lesbians in the wom-
en's movement, and baiting of the whole movement with
the charge that any woman who fights for her rights
is stepping out of her place, is rejecting her "femininity."
The women's movement has by and large rejected lesbian-
baiting as an attempt to divide and weaken the move-
ment.

While these developments in the radicalization lay the
ground for the rise of the gay liberation movement and
helped inspire radicalized young gay people to fight
against their oppression, the movement itself has in turn

brought about a higher level of understanding of and opposition to the oppression of gay people among radicalizing youth, and has already had a considerable impact on the society in spite of the movement's shortcomings.

This development of the gay liberation movement is progressive. It confronts and helps break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society. The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the capitalist government, and is in the interests of socialism, which can only be built by the mobilization of the working class and its allies in the historic task of rebuilding society, eliminating every vestige of discrimination and oppression spawned by class society, including the oppression of gay people. The party identifies with the aims of this struggle and supports it, and this is reflected in the political position the party has adopted and reaffirmed in this report.

4. Given our political position of support to the struggles of gay people against their oppression, how we carry out that support is a tactical question.

First, let's look at the question of priorities in a strategic long-term sense. The gay liberation movement directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population. The issue it raises is essentially limited to the struggle for the democratic rights of this sector. The gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise. The movements of the major oppressed nationalities in the United States—both because their national-democratic demands cannot be met except through the proletarian revolution, and because of their overwhelmingly proletarian composition—raise almost from the beginning demands of the working class as a whole. The women's movement, also, because of the role of the family as a pillar of class society and the character of the economic exploitation of women, raises class demands. The gay liberation movement is much narrower in the scope of its demands.

In our long-term strategic priorities, the gay liberation movement is much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities. Neither does it raise such a central issue of world politics as the struggle against imperialist wars. Our propaganda, our election campaigns, *The Militant*, our forums, etc., must reflect the relative weight and importance of the gay liberation movement compared to other movements and issues of more central importance. The major issues we should be concentrating on are the big questions of the class struggle, and this must be reflected in the totality of the party's projection of its program. It would be a mistake to place equal emphasis upon the struggle of women or Blacks, and that of gay people, for example.

Exactly how the party should orient towards this movement at the present time has to be considered in light of the concrete situation of this movement, and in relation to other fields of work and tasks facing the party.

The gay liberation movement is at present very diffuse, not organized into any single grouping or action front on a national scale. In 1969 and 1970, gay liberation organizations sprang up on campuses and major

cities across the country. A number of demonstrations and actions were held—the largest have been the annual Christopher St. demonstrations in 1970, '71, and '72. From what we can tell from the probe of the gay liberation movement conducted by the party, and developments since then, there has been an evolution of the organized gay liberation movement. A sector of the movement developed in an ultraleft and inward-turned direction. This sector became part of the broader ultraleft and commune-oriented youth current. In some areas, this process resulted in the virtual disappearance of any viable organized expression of the gay liberation movement.

There have been some notable exceptions to this. The most stable of the gay rights organizations is the Gay Activists Alliance in New York, which has continued to carry out activities directed against gay oppression. On the campus, many groups have become essentially social groupings to provide social outlets and help for gays, although we can expect that these organizations could support struggles should they develop.

Since the 1972 party literary discussion on the gay liberation movement, there has been no significant steps towards the formation of a national framework of gay liberation organizations or a national focus of action by gay liberation groups. In fact, the direction seems to be the opposite at this time, with such a national focus or organization less likely.

In view of the present state of the organized gay liberation movement on a national scale, we should not attempt to carry out a national party intervention in the gay liberation movement or project a national party campaign on this question at the present time. Thus we should make no reallocation of our forces to generally assign comrades to this movement. Our support to this movement will be mainly in our propaganda in the next period, as it has been. There is no national gay liberation organization which could be a focus of our intervention. There is no national action coalition around specific issues of gay oppression which we could support and help build. Any attempt by us to start from scratch and try to build such an organization or coalition would fail in the given conditions, where we do not see much motion toward such formations. We cannot attempt to substitute our own small forces, in any movement, for broader forces we might like to see organized but which are not at the present time.

On a local level there has been somewhat of a dropping off of struggles for the rights of gay people in the past period, but what struggles have occurred have been locally organized. Where such demonstrations, defense cases, etc., occur, the party should support them. Branches have the responsibility to carry out any such work within the context of carrying out the major campaigns being conducted by the party.

5. During the party literary discussion, an issue was raised concerning the party attitude concerning dress and appearance of comrades. This question and others related to it go beyond a discussion of the gay liberation movement, raising a more general question of the image and functioning of the party.

The party does have a concern with the image of the party as projected by the dress and decorum of individual members that would in fact prohibit certain clothing, like dresses, from being worn by male comrades. There is

a more general question involved, concerning the dress and appearance of all members. While we have no set of rules concerning dress, we do have a tradition of assuming that SWP members will dress and act in such a way as to project the party as a serious organization. If our image were to become exotic, that would stand in the way of recruiting and influencing masses of people justifiably suspicious of people that are obviously extremely eccentric. A political person who deviates too far from the social norm in questions like that of dress has lost or never had a sense of proportion about what is politically important and what is secondary.

The wearing of this or that kind of clothing has nothing to do with being a revolutionary, and responsible members subordinate personal whims or desires in this regard to the political objective of not placing unnecessary obstacles in our way. Our general rule should be to dress within the socially accepted styles, and the party units have the responsibility to see to it that individual members do not abuse the party by projecting an exotic image of the party.

There are other aspects to this general question. One of these is a pressure upon the party from a small and ultraleft section of the women's movement that asserts that to be a "true feminist" a woman should be a lesbian or at least not live with a man, or must not wear certain make-up, etc. Our conception of a feminist has nothing to do with an evaluation of her personal life. It is of a woman who fights politically for the liberation of women — no matter what her personal life.

Another question which has been raised concerns all-women functions organized by the party. In certain cases, all-women's classes, discussions, or more informal gatherings organized by the party can help bring contacts closer, provide an atmosphere for contacts to more easily exchange ideas with party spokeswomen, etc., and the same thing can be said of similar all-Black functions. Such functions must be organized in such a way that they do not project an image that the function is in reality restricted to lesbians. This can drive away many women who feel uncomfortable in such an atmosphere.

The same can be said of our attitude towards social functions of women's organizations we support.

A word should be said concerning our social functions in general. Such functions organized by the party are political functions, and must be organized as such, with a general tone and atmosphere that all the various types of people we seek to recruit and bring around the party are comfortable in. Sexual activities, whether heterosexual or homosexual, have no place at party socials.

In general, we must resist pressures upon the party that originate from certain sectors of the radicalized layers (not only in the gay liberation movement, of course, but among all the radicalized layers) who have turned towards counter-culturalism and away from politics.

6. Since we project no national campaign of the party at the present time in the gay liberation movement, there is no need to have a separate point on the convention agenda on this question.

(Vol. 31, No. 15)

FOR AN INTERVENTION INTO THE
GAY LIBERATION STRUGGLE
by David Thorstad and Kendall Green,
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Introduction

The gay liberation movement represents the eruption into the arena of political and social struggle of a sector of the oppressed whose anger, pent up and suppressed for thousands of years, is now beginning to be released on a scale never before seen. This layer of the oppressed is placing blame for its oppression where it belongs: on the social and political institutions of society.

In contrast to the general approach of the pioneering gay groups, the current gay liberation movement is not requesting mere tolerance and integration into this unjust society. Rather, gays are demanding that society abandon its exclusive heterosexual norm, grant them full civil and human rights, and allow for the full acceptance of their sexual orientation as no less valid than that of heterosexuals.

In the four years since New York's Stonewall riots, gay liberation has entered the national and international political scene on a scale sufficient to show that the curtain of silence with which capitalism suffocates the cry for gay freedom can successfully be pierced. Not only, in fact, has the curtain been pierced, but for the first time in history there are indications of a truly mass-scale support for the just demands being raised by the gay movement.

It is testimony to the depth of the current radicalization that it has brought tens of thousands of gays into open struggle against their oppression and that it has begun to instill the idea in millions of others that their lot can be improved.

The gay liberation movement is a struggle for full civil, human and democratic rights. It is a struggle against a form of oppression that is rooted in the need of capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior both as part of its general repression of sexuality and because homosexual behavior conflicts with society's exclusive heterosexual norm. This norm is reinforced by all the institutions of capitalist society, beginning with the family, and continued in the schools, churches, and synagogues. Members of society who refuse to conform to this norm are threatened with jail, physical extermination or mutilation; in advanced capitalist societies, they are driven into the underground subculture of the big cities where they are exploited and preyed upon by the syndicates and the police.

While partial concessions can be wrested from the capitalist state by the struggle of large numbers of gays for their rights, so long as society is predicated on the need to suppress homosexual behavior, the full rights of gay people will not be achieved. The partial removal of some of the legal restrictions and discrimination alone will not mean freedom for gays; nowhere in the world where such reforms have been achieved are gays really free.

The gay liberation movement demands changes that

not only pit it against bourgeois morality and deeply instilled prejudices, but bring it into direct conflict with the capitalist state over the right of persons with a homosexual orientation to control their own bodies and destiny. The oppression of gays is so deeply rooted in the needs and fabric of capitalist society that nothing short of a socialist revolution can win their liberation.

I. Rise of the Gay Liberation Movement

The stage for the current wave of gay liberation was set by the struggles of the civil rights, antiwar, and women's liberation movements. While many gays had participated in these movements, and for years in the left in general, the sight of other oppressed groups fighting for their rights gave gays the confidence in their own ability to do the same. They were further encouraged by the general attitude of questioning sexuality and sex roles that has been a part of the current youth radicalization.

The women's movement did more than any other single movement to inspire gays with this confidence, in part because it raised the issue of sexual oppression, in part because it helped to undermine heterosexual male supremacy, and in part because it inspired lesbians within its own ranks to extend the scope of the struggle for liberation to the battleground for homosexual rights.

The shock waves of the June 1969 Stonewall riots and the New York Gay Pride march of 6,000 the following year reverberated around the world. They were felt within our party, too. The first important sign of this was the decision to eliminate the antigay exclusion policy that had evolved during the 1960s as an anachronistic hangover within the revolutionary party itself from the McCarthyism of the 1950s. In the two and a half years since then, we have been grappling with the question of how to relate the program and purpose of the revolutionary party to this new phenomenon. Our recognition of the justice of the struggle for gay rights is reflected in the May 25, 1971, Political Committee motion of "unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights, including civil and human rights, and against all the forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism."

Gays responded to the freer atmosphere created by the developing radicalization and the example of other oppressed groups struggling for their rights by refusing to relegate the struggle for their own rights to low priority—behind the needs of other, more "legitimate" and less controversial, struggles of the oppressed. They also began to abandon the stance of pleading for tolerance that had characterized most of the earlier "homophile" groups like the Mattachine Society, ONE, and Daughters of Bilitis. They began to demand that their rights be granted immediately. The fear and loathing on the part of heterosexuals and the threat of reprisals, which only

months earlier had still been sufficient to prevent all but a few gays from daring to reveal their sexual orientation, were no longer so intimidating.

Gays began to reject society's claim that they are sick and inferior—some kind of genetic, psychological, sociological, or historical aberration—thereby rejecting the major myth society uses to force gays to internalize their oppression and keep them in a state of self-hatred and demobilization. They began to redirect that oppression outward at the society from which it originated, and to assert that their sexual orientation was in no way inferior to a heterosexual orientation. They asserted that it was not gays that needed to be changed, but the society that oppresses them. The tone of the new wave of gay militants was reflected in the irreverent leaflet calling the first meeting of the New York Gay Liberation Front: "Do you think homosexuals are revolting? You bet your sweet ass we are!"

This new mood of self-affirmation popularized the slogan "Gay is Good!" and the concept of gay pride. The slogan had originated with a motion by Frank Kameny to the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO) in 1968 asserting the right of homosexuals to live their lives openly, fully and freely, without pressure to convert to heterosexuality and without legal or extralegal penalties for their sexual activity. The slogan plays a two-fold role in developing political consciousness among gays. First, it is an appeal to closeted gays to reject their feelings of self-hatred and struggle openly for their rights. This appeal is also expressed in the slogan "Out of the Closets, Into the Streets!" Second, the slogan asserts that gays will no longer accept the myths society uses to justify and perpetuate its efforts to suppress homosexuality. These myths range from the theological notion that homosexuality is "unnatural," to the Stalinist-inspired view that it is a product of "bourgeois decadence" (or the variation that it is a product of class society), to the various "theories" of bourgeois psychiatrists that homosexuality is an illness. From the very beginning, the gay liberation movement has found it necessary to challenge such myths and prejudices because they function as the main "theoretical" underpinning for society's anti-gay edifice.

In June 1970, the first gay pride march was held in New York City to commemorate the Stonewall riots. More than 6,000 gays, representing all layers of the gay community, turned out for this affirmation of gay pride. The following year more than 25,000 demonstrated in cities throughout the United States, with the largest number in New York.

The 1972 marches saw the introduction of new features in gay pride demonstrations. In Philadelphia, where some 6,000 marched, a large number of sympathizing heterosexuals joined in behind a banner proclaiming "Straights for Gays." Half of the demonstration consisted of Blacks. And in Los Angeles, the march went beyond the usual gay pride focus to include four demands: (1) Repeal all statutes regulating sexual behavior between consenting individuals; (2) No "crimes" without victims; release all persons convicted of so-called sex offenses; (3) End discrimination against gays in all areas of life; (4) End police harassment of gays.

Such demonstrations of thousands of homosexuals openly and proudly proclaiming their sexual orientation

have a powerful political and social impact that we welcome and support. The gay movement, however, also needs to develop campaigns and programs that can involve large numbers of gays and sympathizers in political struggles to fight for gay rights and wrest concessions from the ruling class.

State of the Gay Movement

There are more than 600 gay organizations throughout the United States, a large proportion of them campus groups. Their particular focus varies considerably from group to group, ranging from counseling, legislative lobbying, and religious activities, to confrontation and political activism. Many provide some kind of social setting, such as lounges, dances, or cabarets, at which gays can be themselves with other gays. The very existence of a gay group on campus frequently leads to a struggle for recognition or funding. They are often the largest and most active political group on campus.

The gay liberation movement has been struggling around a number of issues during the past four years on essentially a local or statewide basis. These issues, around which continued struggle can be expected in the future, has been the following:

1. *Antigay laws.* Sodomy laws, which are usually entitled "crime against nature" or "unnatural copulation" laws, still provide for the punishment of homosexual acts between consenting adults in 42 states. Penalties range from three months in jail to life imprisonment. In many states, the sodomy laws are formulated in such a way as to proscribe certain heterosexual acts as well, though they are used almost exclusively against gays. Since 1961, eight states have dropped such laws; revisions of the law are under consideration in other states. While these laws are enforced infrequently and selectively, their very existence serves to reinforce and provide legal justification for discrimination and oppression in other areas.

In addition to the sodomy laws, other laws are used to victimize gays, including cross-dressing, solicitation, lewd behavior, and loitering statutes.

In a number of states, there have been demonstrations against these laws. Gay groups from throughout New York state, for example, were joined by groups from Connecticut and New Jersey in marches on Albany in 1971 and 1972 demanding repeal of the sodomy, solicitation, and cross-dressing laws.

While the sodomy laws are universally opposed by gays, and while their abolition would represent an important civil rights victory, the demand for their repeal has not been the primary focus of the gay movement. There are a number of reasons for this: First, however unjust these laws are, few gays come into *direct* conflict with them, as long as they restrict their sexual activity to private quarters; second, the reformist leaderships in the gay movement have tended to refrain from organizing mass actions, preferring to focus on lobbying activity; and third, there is an ultraleftist tendency among some to spurn struggle for law repeal as reformist.

While a major campaign has not developed in the gay movement to fight these antigay laws, the potential for such a campaign exists in some areas. Where the potential exists, the main obstacle to developing such campaigns remains the reformist gay leaderships. Victories in fighting for the repeal of these laws can be won and

would help provide further impetus to the developing gay liberation struggle.

2. *Equal rights legislation.* The best example of this kind of legislation is Intro 475, a bill in New York City that would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in jobs, housing, and public accommodations. First introduced into the city council in January 1971, it has been kept bottled-up in committee ever since. Despite impressive support from community, union, and political leaders, it has been defeated three times in committee votes. Intro 475 has been an important focus of New York gay groups, particularly the Gay Activists Alliance, and has prompted numerous demonstrations, organized largely as last-ditch efforts when behind-the-scenes lobbying reached an impasse. In spite of a certain demoralization resulting from the repeated defeats of the bill in committee and the failure of the reformist forces in the gay movement to provide proper leadership, Intro 475 remains a key issue in the New York gay movement. The outcome of this struggle will have repercussions in the gay movement throughout the country and in Canada.

Similar, though not so encompassing, legislation has been enacted in East Lansing, Ann Arbor, and San Francisco. Public hearings on a similar bill were held in Washington, D.C., in May. While there have not yet been any efforts to push for a national Equal Rights Amendment-type campaign to extend civil rights legislation to include sexual orientation, such a future development cannot be ruled out.

One excuse used by opponents of municipal legislation like Intro 475 is that the existence of state sodomy laws contravenes such local legislation. This argument merely highlights the interrelated nature of the fight for such legislation and the struggle against the state sodomy laws.

3. *Police harassment.* This is a constant feature in the lives of gays and one that has often sparked protests by gay groups. The harassment takes many forms, including bar raids like the one that set off the Stonewall riots, entrapment, beatings, arrests for solicitation or lewd conduct. Such harassment, which serves to keep gays from coming together to fight their oppression, continues to be a problem in states where the sodomy laws have been repealed. Protests over cases of police harassment have occurred in cities all across the country.

4. *Campus recognition.* The right to form gay groups and propagandize for gay liberation is far from having been won. Recognition battles, often victorious, have been fought from coast to coast. Such struggles were important issues this spring in Kansas and Missouri, for example. A gay recognition fight at New York's Fordham University was one of the most important struggles on that campus last year. In addition to recognized gay groups, an increasingly common phenomenon on American campuses has become gay studies course. As the gay movement grows, the struggle for such programs can be expected to spread.

5. *Job discrimination.* Few jobs are open to known homosexuals. This forces the overwhelming majority of gays to hide their identity as a matter of survival; it makes a dual existence necessary for millions. Job-related discrimination is one of the most intense forms of oppression faced by gays of both sexes. The mere suspicion that one is gay is often enough to get one fired or keep

one from being hired in the first place. Employers, in the police, insurance and detective agencies, and the military often collaborate and exchange information that is used to prevent prospective employees who happen to be gay from being hired. Some cities explicitly ban gays from working in certain jobs, such as bartending, taxi driving and teaching.

Many cases of job discrimination have been fought by the gay movement, with techniques ranging from court suits, to protest demonstrations, to organizing with unions. Under pressure from GAA zap demonstrations last year, the New York Taxi Commission agreed to abandon its policy of requiring gay taxi drivers to undergo yearly psychiatric examinations. Broad support was organized to defend gay activist Michael McConnell when the University of Minnesota refused to hire him as a librarian. The case also spurred gay librarians to set up a special task force to fight for gay rights inside their national association. Gay teachers announced the formation of a gay caucus for similar purposes at last year's convention of the National Education Association.

6. *Oppression by the psychiatric profession.* The use of aversion therapy or other related methods of torture is common throughout the United States, including on a number of college campuses and in prisons. The underlying assumption of such "therapy" is that human beings, unless tampered with, are "naturally" heterosexual.

Since homosexuality is officially viewed by the psychiatric profession as a sickness, it is considered professionally ethical for psychiatrists to experiment in all kinds of barbaric techniques, including electric shock treatment, in an effort to discover the elusive "cure" for the "illness."

The gay liberation movement is fighting this vicious, self-fulfilling branding of homosexual behavior as an illness. It has done so through its propaganda, through protest demonstrations, and through direct intervention in the main professional institution responsible for perpetuating the sickness "theory"—the American Psychiatric Association (APA). After several years of campaigning to get the APA to remove homosexuality from its official diagnostic category of mental disorders, the issue became a major focus of attention at this year's APA convention in Honolulu in May. Although there is increasing support for the gay movement's stand within the profession, however, it has still not acquiesced. This derogatory labeling of gays by psychiatrists is used by other institutions as a rationale for continuing their own discriminatory policies.

7. *Elections.* The U.S. gay liberation movement first forced capitalist candidates to take public positions on gay rights during the 1970 campaign in New York. By confronting the campaigning candidates, it succeeded in forcing several Democratic candidates and one Republican candidate to issue public statements of support. Within two years, gay liberation had become a significant enough issue for gay delegates at the Democratic Party national convention to be given time to raise the gay rights issue before the delegates and on national television. Today, lip service to gay rights is common for candidates of both capitalist parties in areas where a vocal gay movement exists.

The apparent resilience of the Democratic Party under the demagogic McGovern campaign heightened the illu-

sions of large numbers of gays, including gay activists, in the ability of capitalist politics to serve as an effective vehicle for bringing about changes that would benefit gays. The McGovern campaign temporarily demobilized the gay liberation struggle, and the effects are still being felt today.

The overwhelming defeat of the gay rights plank at the Democratic Party convention, however, and the subsequent widespread disillusionment with McGovern himself, have increased suspicion of politicians among gays and left pro-Democratic reformist leaders in the gay movement in a more vulnerable position than before. Their reliance on the goodwill of individual capitalist politicians has held back gay liberation by discouraging gays from organizing mass-action campaigns for their rights. Their strategy can only lead to demoralization and defeats for the gay movement.

Our party's position has been one of unequivocal support to gay rights. Such a plank has generally been included in our campaign literature. We have tended, however, to treat gay rights as an afterthought in our campaigns. With the exception of the Sally Anderson campaign in Los Angeles, we have not run openly gay candidates with a special appeal to the gay movement to support our campaign. Our failure to fully utilize our election campaigns as effective tools to fight for gay liberation, and our nonintervention in the gay movement, have seriously hampered our ability to combat the efforts of the reformists to demobilize and coopt the gay movement.

Forces in the Gay Liberation

There is no central political force in the gay liberation movement. Of the various tendencies, however, the reformists are clearly dominant. The ultraleftists of the early Gay Liberation Front stage of the gay movement enjoy no significant influence today; their groups have generally dissolved.

The attitude of the reformists (reflected in the approach of the leadership of New York's GAA and in the editorial policy of the Los Angeles-based gay newspaper *The Advocate*, for instance) is a bankrupt one of abstaining from mass mobilizations and concentrating on supporting "good" guys and opposing "bad" guys. This policy leads directly into the liberal ballot box and encourages the oppressed to run after crumbs from the table of the oppressor. The failure of their approach is clear from the snow job at the Democratic Party convention and the cynical refusal of the liberal "friends of gays" in the New York city council to pass Intro 475 even after signing statements promising to do so.

The only effective alternative to the approach of the reformists is a strategy of struggle that places no reliance on capitalist politicians and that can reach out to mobilize gays and their supporters in mass action against the oppressive laws and institutions of the capitalist system.

A small section of the gay liberation movement, believing that homosexual behavior *per se* is more progressive than heterosexuality, advocates homosexuality or bisexuality as the road toward emancipation and the abolition of the family. Others seek personal solutions to oppression that is ingrained in the social fabric of capitalism by "dropping out" and developing "countercultural" lifestyles. But the oppression of gays is rooted in the capitalist

system itself, with its norm of exclusive heterosexuality, not in individual heterosexually oriented persons. Gays cannot escape their oppression in an elusive "gay culture."

This escapist approach leads away from mobilizing the oppressed to fight for their rights and toward attempting to change one's own head rather than change a rotten society. As Marxists, we see the emancipation of homosexuals as possible only through the destruction of the entire system that fosters their oppression and through its replacement with socialism.

Other political tendencies, for the most part, do not regard gay liberation as a valid or important question to relate to. With the exception of the "gay caucus" of the Youth Against War and Fascism (which is occasionally seen at gay demonstrations), and International Socialists (which is pulling back from an earlier flirtation with gay liberation), our opponents abstain from or are openly hostile to gay liberation. The Stalinists, the Maoists, and the Workers League virtually echo the worst positions of the bourgeoisie.

International aspects

The gay liberation movement is an international phenomenon. This phenomenon can be expected to increase because the causes of gay oppression are rooted in a patriarchal system that is worldwide and because the impact of the gay movement cannot be restricted within national boundaries. A directory of gay organizations published by New York's GAA this year lists some 200 gay groups in twenty countries other than the United States. The nature of these groups varies, including old-line homophile groups, groups with independent mass-action struggle perspectives, and ultraleft and spontaneist groups.

The growth of these groups has been uneven and has occurred without any kind of international coordination, although initial steps toward some coordination have been taken, such as a gathering of European groups in Denmark last September. The lack of such coordination makes it difficult to assess the actual state of the gay movement on an international scale, but the trend appears to be on the upswing. Gay pride actions are scheduled this year for the first time in New Zealand, for instance, and radical gays in Norway decided this spring to embark on a campaign to win the leftist parties to active support for gay liberation. The effects of this campaign can already be seen in sympathetic coverage in the left-wing press, even including the newspaper of the main Norwegian Maoist organization.

The struggle for gay liberation can also make itself felt inside the workers states, where the prevailing Stalinist attitude toward homosexuality makes the life of gays unbearable. In the Soviet Union, where homosexual acts can bring three to eight years in jail, the democratic movement has thus far held back from actively defending gay rights because, however just, it is still considered too unpopular an issue, according to the former democratic activist Valery Chalidze, who told the *New York Times Magazine* (March 4) that he had attempted to win the movement in Moscow to such a stance. As the full truth about the Stalinist counterrevolution in the area of sexuality becomes more widely known—as it will, in part, through the efforts of the gay liberation movement in the capitalist countries—there is no reason not to think

that the gay movement will make a useful contribution to the struggle for a political revolution inside the Soviet Union.

The issue of the increasing persecution of gays in Cuba has already had a considerable impact within the American gay movement. This issue will gain in importance if the new draft penal code—which even provides for the death penalty for some homosexual acts—is adopted.

The oppression of gays in Cuba and the Soviet Union has been one of the most important causes of hostility or skepticism toward socialism among American gay activists. Only a Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism and Bolshevism, coupled with an active intervention by revolutionists in the gay liberation movement, can effectively combat these attitudes.

II. Gay Liberation and the Struggle Against Capitalism

Attitudes toward homosexuality vary from culture to culture and epoch to epoch. Many cultures condone or encourage it. Others, like our own, actively and viciously suppress it in all of society's members, regardless of age, sex, or frequency of indulgence. While this is an extreme attitude, it is generally shared by all cultures with a Judeo-Christian tradition.

The effort to suppress homosexual behavior is no accident. "Accidents" of such magnitude, so intricately interwoven into the fabric of society, do not repeat themselves for thousands of years without reason. Marxists recognize that such long-standing oppression reflects the needs of the society that fosters it, and we identify the source of that oppression as residing in the institutions and ideology of class society.

The effort of capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior begins in the very first institution that most humans encounter—the family. It is there that antihomosexual fears and prejudices and society's exclusive heterosexual norm are first instilled, that sex-role training is first imparted, and that the repression of sexuality in general begins. This is all reinforced by the schools, churches, synagogues, the psychiatric profession, and the mass media. Anyone who deviates can be punished by the law, which enshrines the antihomosexual principle carried out by landlords, employers, and the police.

The first thing one is told when one discovers one's homosexual feelings is that one is "sick." Instead of being allowed to accept their feelings, gays are taught to deny them. This myth is the source of immense suffering for gay people.

Revolutionary Marxists oppose all forms of oppression of homosexuals. This includes rejecting the bourgeois and Stalinist "theories" that are used to justify that oppression. We reject the notion that homosexuals are inferior to heterosexuals with the same contempt that we reject the allegation that Blacks are inferior to whites or women inferior to men. We do so because it is a vicious prejudice that divides the working class and instills self-hatred in the oppressed. We welcome the new combativity of the gay liberation movement and solid-
arize ourselves with the affirmation of dignity and pride reflected in the slogan "Gay Is Good!"

Virtually all of the institutions of capitalist society are geared to make persons who engage in homosexual acts into social pariahs. To alter this situation and remove homosexual oppression will require a full-scale revolu-

tionary assault on the institutions of capitalist society.

The struggle for gay liberation is a struggle for democratic rights—equality with heterosexually oriented persons, and an end to discrimination, persecution, and repression. The struggle for such rights has developed independently of the ruling class and its institutions; the thrust of the gay liberation struggle is directed against those institutions and is in the interest of the American working class. The struggle to win such rights will continue to play an important role in the radicalization and will be a significant part of the process leading to socialist revolution.

The struggle against gay oppression has a useful contribution to make to the struggle to overthrow capitalism. It will necessarily help to undermine bourgeois morality, a key prop of capitalist society.

Gay oppression has a conservatizing effect on straight as well as gays. Periods of reaction throughout history have used antihomosexual witch-hunts as a cutting edge. The struggle against society's ingrained antihomosexual norm can only serve to undermine the effectiveness of this tool for keeping the working class and the oppressed in line.

The struggle of gays against the constricting sex role of capitalist society will be welcomed by many heterosexually oriented persons. This too will contribute to undermining the sexual repression that functions as one of the pillars of capitalist oppression and exploitation.

The struggle against gay oppression directly affects a large number of people. The Kinsey studies, for instance, show that at least 25,000,000 Americans have at least a few years' homosexual behavior during their adult lives. Large numbers of Americans engage in this activity in spite of the fact that it entails considerable personal and social risk. Homosexuality is not a rare or even unusual, phenomenon restricted to peripheral elements of society. It is widespread, and so is the suffering and persecution that result from the efforts of society to combat and eradicate it.

Millions of homosexuals—including millions of gay workers—have been given a new sense of their own worth by the rise of the gay movement. Even if they never join a gay organization or demonstration, the self-confidence they have gained because of that movement will make them more combative in other arenas of class struggle. The powerful energy of the assertion of human dignity by those who have been denied it is a central driving force in the entire radicalization.

Moreover, it is virtually assured that, as the gay movement continues to struggle and begins to win victories, many more of those who are now its silent supporters and beneficiaries will step forward to openly join its ranks.

The ultimate impact and appeal of the gay liberation movement can only be understood on the basis of the fact that it involves a struggle not merely for the rights of a presently constituted minority who are defined as gay, but for an end to the built-in need of capitalist society to suppress homosexual behavior in all of its members. Homosexual oppression is reflected not only in the discrimination and persecution directed against persons who are either known or suspected to be gay, but also in the pervasive efforts of capitalist society to completely suppress homosexuality even before it may arise, and to threaten violators with severe reprisals both in this

world and the next. The effects of this oppression are on a far wider scale than merely among those who admit, whether to themselves or publicly, to being gay. Millions who have never engaged in homosexual activities can and must be won to supporting the struggle for gay rights and liberation. The American working class, which will take upon its shoulders the task of transforming and directing the whole social order, can and will ally with all the progressive enemies of capitalism, put aside its prejudices to forge such alliances, and ultimately overcome those prejudices as it begins the evolution toward communist humanity. To believe that American workers cannot be won to support for gay liberation is to fail to grasp either the enormity of their historic task, or their revolutionary capacity to accomplish it, or both.

The attitude of increasing openness toward homosexuality that has developed with the youth radicalization's general questioning of sexual norms is indicative of the potential support for the gay liberation movement among radicalizing sections of the population. This new attitude is reflected, for instance, in the election of Jack Baker, an openly gay militant, as student association president at the University of Minnesota, one of the largest campuses in the country.

While the fear of homosexuality and antigay prejudice certainly remain deeply ingrained in the population, the main hindrance to winning the masses to active support for gay rights is the fact that the gay liberation movement itself has not yet developed aggressive, educational, and mass-action oriented campaigns. The gay movement suffers from a crisis of leadership. This is a crisis that revolutionists can and must help resolve.

III. The Revolutionary Party and Gay Liberation: Our Tasks

The SWP must intervene in and champion the struggle for gay liberation. Our doing so will benefit not only the gay liberation movement, but also the building of the revolutionary party.

Our approach should be flexible. While there is no single focus of action in the gay movement today, we should not let this deter us from seeking ways to support, help

build, and recruit from the gay liberation movement. We should actively relate to the gay liberation movement on a local level.

The following are some of the kinds of activities that we should be involved in:

- Propagandizing in favor of, and building, united fronts around law-repeal campaigns on a statewide level, where appropriate. We should encourage the formation of such united fronts and participate in them, putting forward our perspective of mass mobilization independent of the capitalist class. We should also support united-front fights to win equal rights legislation, whether on a local or national level.

The major forces behind such united fronts will probably come from campus and city-wide gay organizations, but efforts should be made to reach out and involve other forces, including such sympathizing non-gay organizations as unions, nationalist groups, and other political groups.

- Local issues, such as campus-recognition fights, free-speech fights, defense cases, gay pride marches, child custody cases, and struggles against job discrimination, police harassment and entrapment, etc.

- We should step up our use of election campaigns to champion the gay rights struggle. This is an issue on which we must speak out forcefully to educate those we reach through our campaigns about the importance of supporting the struggle against gay oppression. This will be the best way to differentiate ourselves from the supporters of capitalist candidates within the gay movement and to win gay activists to Marxism. Running openly gay candidates for public office can be an especially effective way of doing this.

- As Marxists, we seek to bring our entire program to the masses. This includes our analysis on why Marxists support gay liberation and why gays should be Marxists. Our forums, press, and publications should reflect our championing of and involvement in the gay struggle.

Our assignment of comrades to gay liberation work will be determined in accord with our overall program and campaigns, including our full support to, and championing of, the struggle for gay liberation.

June 22, 1973

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PARTY ON THE RESOLUTION "FOR AN INTERVENTION INTO THE GAY LIBERATION STRUGGLE"

by Steve Beren, Detroit Branch; Kendall Green, David Keepnews, John Lauritsen, Lee Smith and David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local

(Vol. 31, No. 15)

We support the document "For an Intervention into the Gay Liberation Struggle," by David Thorstad and Kendall Green, as a counterresolution in opposition to the April 29, 1973, "Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement" (*Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 3).

We ask comrades who support the general line of the counterresolution to seek discussion of, and a vote on,

"For an Intervention into the Gay Liberation Struggle" in their branches.

We call on the National Committee to include a point in the convention agenda for a discussion of, and a vote on, "For an Intervention into the Gay Liberation Struggle."

June 22, 1973

THREE POINTS CONCERNING OUR COUNTERRESOLUTION
"FOR AN INTERVENTION INTO THE GAY LIBERATION
STRUGGLE"

(Vol. 31, No. 25)

by David Thorstad and Kendall Green,
Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

As signers of the document "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle," which we have submitted as a counterresolution in opposition to the NC Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement, we would like to make the following points:

1) We agree with the general line of the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency in the world movement and of the Draft Political Resolution, submitted by the Political Committee, and consider ourselves part of the majority caucus that will be formed.

2) When it comes to the voting for delegates in the branches, we call on supporters of "For an Intervention

Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" to submit for a vote the following amendment to the Political Resolution (replacing its statement on gay liberation at the bottom of column one, page 20):

"We should continue to support the struggle for gay liberation, along the line of 'For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle,' by David Thorstad and Kendall Green."

3) We urge supporters of "For an Intervention Into the Gay Liberation Struggle" to vote for the general line of the Political Resolution whether or not the above amendment is adopted.

July 18, 1973

(The following is the statement on gay liberation included in the Draft Political Resolution and referred to above. It was the only statement on gay liberation in the entire resolution, which was approved by the Political Committee June 15, 1973. It was this statement that supporters of the Thorstad-Green counterresolution fought to have amended along the lines indicated above.)

We should continue to support the struggle of gay people for their rights, along the line of the memorandum on the gay liberation movement adopted by the April 1973 plenum of the National Committee.

WHERE THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM
ON THE GAY MOVEMENT GOES WRONG

(Vol. 31, No. 29)

by Steve Beren, Detroit Branch; Kendall Green, David Keepnews,
John Lauritsen, and David Thorstad, Upper West Side Branch,
New York Local; and Lee Smith, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

Introduction

The National Committee memorandum on the gay liberation movement presents an incorrect approach to and assessment of gay liberation. It includes no discussion of the growth of the gay movement and a misleading evaluation of the current state of the movement. It misjudges the potential of the movement. It contains obscurantist formulations and outright contradictions that paper over political differences and make clarity on this important question impossible. It minimizes the significance of the gay liberation movement and the impact this anticapitalist struggle can have on the course of the radicalization. It is pervaded with a negative tone that in the end reaches a level bordering on intimidation. It proposes no active intervention into the gay liberation struggle at all, nor does it lay any basis for intervention; indeed, it provides no serious guidelines by which branches should relate to gay liberation.

It would be a serious mistake for the convention to accept this memorandum as the basis for the party's relationship to gay liberation. The memorandum must be rejected.

The following is a discussion of where the memorandum goes wrong.

Two Contradictions

It states: "While we reject with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudices against gay people, including quack psychological 'theories' labelling gays as mentally ill—prejudices echoed by the Stalinists—the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality."

Among other things, this statement contains two contradictions.

1) On the one hand, it claims to reject the notion that gays are mentally ill, yet on the other hand it states—and this is its main point—that the party should take no "stand" on the nature of homosexuality. Yet in our society, homosexuality is branded an illness; this is the official position of the American Psychiatric Association and the medical community in general, and it is one of the main "justifications" for the oppression of homosexually oriented persons. According to this view, it is in the nature of homosexuality to be an illness and in the nature of homosexuals to be mentally ill. How can the memorandum seriously propose to leave open the question of the nature of homosexuality and in the same breath claim to reject "with contempt" the idea that it is a mental illness? Obviously, there is some playing with words going on in this statement. This strikes us as a rather unserious way to deal with an issue that lies at the very root of the struggle of the gay liberation movement.

Furthermore, this statement leaves open the possibility that if gays are not mentally ill, they might be some

other kind of aberration. A freak historical phenomenon, possibly. Or perhaps a distortion of the "normal" human sexual drive produced by the transitory conditions of class society.

In other words, it stops short of rejecting the notion that homosexual behavior is inferior to heterosexual behavior. Why? Is it because this question is irrelevant to the discussion? Hardly, since the struggle against the notion is the underlying thrust of the gay liberation movement, and if we are to properly relate to the movement, we will have to have a position on this. Is it because to reject this notion would be to "take a stand" on the nature of homosexuality? If so, then why can such a "stand" not be taken? Particularly in view of the fact that the memorandum has already taken a "stand" on the nature of homosexuality by rejecting the idea that it represents an illness.

Finally, what does the memorandum have in mind with the concept of the "value" of homosexuality? Does this mean that it wishes to suspend judgment on whether homosexuality is "bad" or not (whatever that might mean)? Does it mean that judgment should be suspended on whether homosexuality can be a *positive* factor in the lives of gay people, rather than something to be ashamed of, denied, and suppressed? Does it mean to suggest that in the face of a gay person's assertion that it is better to openly and proudly accept one's homosexuality than to hide and force oneself into a constricting heterosexual mold, revolutionists should stand by silently, or note that we have no opinion?

This is not a matter of taking a stand on personal tastes. Personal tastes have nothing whatever to do with this. What is involved is a recognition of historical and scientific fact, as well as an expression of political solidarity with the central thrust of gay liberation, which is to bring about a society in which exclusive heterosexuality is no longer the norm.

We are not suggesting that what is needed is a vote on the merits of each comrade's sexual orientation or preference. We are not proposing, for instance, that comrades should vote on whether homosexuality is "good" or "bad." What we *are* saying is that it is necessary that the party completely reject the notion that homosexual behavior is inferior to heterosexual behavior; it must forthrightly reject the sickness theory of homosexuality, as well as the other antigay corollaries, such as the Stalinist contention that it is a product of "bourgeois decadence" and the variation that it is a product of class society. Unless it does so, the party will be in no position to intervene effectively in the gay liberation struggle.

2) The second contradiction lies in the fact that while the statement claims to reject—"with contempt"—all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people, it goes on only a few paragraphs later (p. 8) to assert that it is difficult

to tell what is prejudice and what is not: "Especially concerning homosexuality, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available." If it is difficult to recognize prejudice, how can it be rejected "with contempt"—which would imply some measure of certainty in ascertaining the prejudice that is being rejected?

Such a blatant contradiction in the memorandum certainly raises questions as to the seriousness of the National Committee's commitment to rejecting antigay prejudice and the sickness theory. It is difficult to see how one can take a stand in one breath, and in the next exclude any basis for taking a stand, without the entire exercise appearing dishonest. This approach has the effect of trivializing a serious problem.

There are other things wrong with the statement that "it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available" about homosexuality.

First, it is not difficult to separate what is "objectively based" from what is not, with regard to homosexuality. The facts have been well established over the decades by scholars and scientists in various disciplines, among them history, anthropology, ethnology, statistical research, zoology, sociology, and psychology. Without familiarity with these investigations, of course, the task is not only difficult, but impossible. However, the information is not especially hard to obtain, and it is not difficult to tell what is objectively based from what is biased rubbish.

Much of this information was covered in last year's literary discussion, and it is widely known in the gay movement and making headway in society as a whole. The facts, as Kinsey noted, show that "the capacity of an individual to respond erotically to any sort of stimulus, whether it is provided by another person of the same or of the opposite sex, is basic in the species." Homosexual activity "has been a significant part of human sexual activity ever since the dawn of history, primarily because it is an expression of capacities that are basic in the human animal."

Second, it is not difficult to ascertain what is prejudice in the available knowledge and attitudes about homosexuality. Homosexuals, for instance, are quite skilled at ascertaining such prejudice. A typical example of it is this statement by one of the most prominent (heterosexual) "authorities" on homosexuality, Dr. Charles Socarides: "The obligatory homosexual is unable to function in the most meaningful relationship in life: the male-female sexual union and the affective state of love, tenderness, and joy with a partner of the opposite sex." This kind of authoritative prejudice defines homosexuals into inferiority, sickness, sin, or whatever the bag of the person doing the defining happens to be. It invariably has its roots in theological superstition, rationalizations for the persecution of homosexuality, the hyperactive imaginations of certain psychiatrists, etc.

To say that it is difficult to ascertain what is prejudice when it comes to homosexuality is preposterous, if not simply reactionary. Is it difficult to ascertain prejudice when it comes to Blacks, or women? The assertion that it is in the case of gays is nothing more than an accommodation to the prejudices of persons who might subscribe to the idea. To attempt to use such an accommodation to prejudice as an argument for not forthrightly rejecting

the false notion that homosexuality is, by its very nature, inferior to heterosexuality, amounts, at best, to nothing more than a sleight of hand. At worst, it is a capitulation to bourgeois prejudice.

This assertion opens the door to an atmosphere in which open expressions of antigay prejudice could be tolerated in the party. We wonder what the effect of this would be on our ability to recruit and hold homosexual socialists.

Is Gay Liberation Political?

In proposing to show why the party should "not take a stand" on the question it has just taken a stand on, the memorandum parades a catalog of truisms about the aim of a revolutionary party: to "construct a mass revolutionary proletarian political party that will mobilize the working class and its allies. . . ." to the taking of state power; to adopt "political positions that guide its work"; not to take positions on questions that "dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and cripple its ability to mobilize the masses on political questions."

It is difficult to read this paragraph, with its repetitive stressing of the fact that the revolutionary party is a political organization, without coming away with the feeling that it intends to suggest that there is something inherently apolitical, cultural, or countercultural about gay liberation. Without ever directly stating so, it manages to imply that the gay liberation struggle, by its very nature, raises issues that the party should avoid, steer clear of, and indeed that these issues pose such a danger for the party that it must go out of its way to make clear that it avoids and steers clear of them. So serious is this danger that to take a position on them would risk narrowing its appeal and crippling its ability to mobilize the masses. Clearly, there is something about gay liberation that is seen as posing a threat to the party's ability to carry out its tasks—a threat that the memorandum warns against in terms one cannot imagine being invoked in regard to any other struggle of the oppressed.

In what does this threat lie? Apparently in the insistence of the gay liberation movement that the exclusive heterosexual norm of society represents a distortion of human sexuality and that homosexuality is not inferior to heterosexuality. It no doubt also lies in the fact that this insistence of the gay liberation movement is being advanced within the revolutionary party by comrades such as ourselves, who regard it as a crucial question, the answer to which will determine the nature of the relationship the party will have toward this struggle of the oppressed. We believe this threat to be imaginary.

Two things about the memorandum's alarmist warning on the threat of gay liberation strike us as odd: 1) It implicitly places a struggle of the oppressed and the revolutionary party in potential conflict with each other; it does this in terms that suggest an inherent antagonism to political questions on the part of those oppressed people; 2) It is profoundly conservative. Under the guise of refraining from "advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint," it is refusing to forthrightly reject the oppressive notion that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality. This conservatism reflects a view that homosexual liberation is essentially a personal, not a political matter.

This section of the memorandum, and indeed the memorandum as a whole, only makes sense if the gay liberation movement is viewed as essentially a countercultural movement, with some political overtones. How else can we explain the peculiar notion that the rejection of the stigma of inferiority associated with one of the largest oppressed groups in this society entails the risk of actually impairing the ability of the SWP to mobilize the masses on political questions? Is the struggle of gay people against oppression—including society's claim that they are inferior—not a political question? The memorandum implies that when gays assert that they are not inferior, that there is nothing "unnatural," "sick," "queer," or "exotic" about homosexuality, they are simply advancing their own particular cultural viewpoint—a matter of personal taste, but hardly a politically compelling viewpoint. We regard this implication as insulting.

Rather than detract from the political character of the party, a position clearly recognizing homosexuality as being inferior to heterosexuality is an essential prerequisite for any serious intervention into the gay liberation struggle. It is an elementary necessity if the party never to embrace gay liberation. Rather than skirt this question, it must be fully cognizant—and the gay liberation movement is—of the role played by these myths of the oppression of gays. The agnostic approach of the memorandum would make this impossible.

The party must be in a position to approach gays with a serious political analysis of their oppression; this is impossible without a historical-materialist view of the matter and a clear rejection of bourgeois and Stalinist-inspired notions that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality.

This does not require a full-blown theory of sexuality. It requires only that we divest ourselves of our own prejudice and recognize the facts. A refusal to do so would be tantamount to placing a question mark over the validity of the gay liberation struggle.

In one sense, an analogy with the Black liberation struggle could be made here. From time to time, racist "scientists" try to prove that Blacks are naturally inferior to whites. They back up their claims with "objective" studies, etc. Their "theories" have all kinds of political and social implications for a racist society—as in England at the moment, for instance, where there has been a considerable influx of nonwhite immigrants. When Blacks indignantly rebut such slurs on their race, do revolutionists stand aside, rationalizing an agnostic stance with the explanation that to do any more might cripple the party's ability to mobilize the masses on political questions? Of course not.

Why should the sexist claims about the nature of homosexuality be treated any differently? Certainly not because the "evidence" is any more persuasive. What will be crippled by the memorandum's approach will be our ability to recruit gay liberation activists.

By proposing not to take a stand on the nature of homosexuality—that is, by refusing to accept homosexuality as no less "natural" than heterosexuality and to reject firmly the idea that it is inferior to heterosexuality—the memorandum is laying the basis for proposing a mere civil-rights approach to gay liberation—and, as we shall see later on, it is a weak one at that. It is proposing that the role of the revolutionary party is simply to "support"

the civil rights of homosexually oriented persons, not to become directly involved in the struggle for homosexual liberation, to champion it, and to strive to integrate the struggle into the struggle to overthrow capitalism. It views gay liberation as a struggle to win tolerance from a basically heterosexual society, not as a struggle to bring about a full acceptance of homosexual behavior. But the gay liberation struggle involves a struggle not merely for tolerance and civil rights, but for full human rights and the elimination of society's enforced exclusively heterosexual norm. This will necessitate the complete abolition of society as presently constituted.

To be able to relate to this struggle properly requires going beyond a civil-rights approach. By refusing to do so, the memorandum would disarm the party and reduce its relationship to the gay liberation struggle to one essentially of "supporting" from the sidelines. It betrays a grasp of gay liberation that is more reformist than revolutionary.

Scientific Investigation and Knowledge

The whole question of the nature of homosexuality, says the memorandum, is complicated by the fact that "scientific investigation of sexuality" is "in its infancy." This statement appears intended to suggest that what is known about homosexuality is so primitive as to be unreliable. It is made not as an expression of caution (which would be understandable) but as an argument for shoving the whole question aside. This approach seems a bit drastic.

In its rush to sweep this matter aside, the memorandum refers to only one "science"—psychology—as an example of the infantile level of knowledge about homosexuality. As a matter of fact, homosexuals consider one of the most injurious of these "sciences" to be psychology, and the related field of psychiatry, which has hardly progressed beyond the level of primitive witch doctors, and has an admittedly lower batting average when it comes to "curing" its patients. But why no mention of other disciplines that have made far more useful, and less speculative, contributions to knowledge about homosexuality?

"Uncovering the historical, anthropological and sociological truth about homosexuality constitutes an essential weapon in the struggle for sexual freedom." This was the conclusion of the article "Homosexuality: Fact versus Myth" in the "gay pride" issue of *The Militant* July 2, 1971. Now, two years later, with the memorandum, the approach that is being proposed is rather different: Rather than planting the party's feet firmly on the ground of scientific and historical truth regarding homosexuality, it proposes an agnostic approach to these questions, and goes so far as to say that truth cannot even be objectively distinguished from prejudice.

"Future Human Sexuality"

Having reduced the question of the "nature of homosexuality" to "a hopeless tangle of opinions, prejudices and personal preferences," the memorandum goes on to observe: "Neither is scientific knowledge advanced enough on this question for us to be able to say what future human sexuality will be like in a classless society."

This is irrelevant to a resolution on gay liberation. Certainly, we all have our own ideas on this subject, but no one is arguing in favor of the party's adopting them.

What is relevant, however—and it is conspicuous by its absence from the memorandum—is a rejection of the Stalinist-inspired view that homosexuality is a product of class society that will wither away, so to speak, under a socialist society. The memorandum does not reject this reactionary, unscientific view.

What's Wrong With an Agnostic Stance?

The refusal of the memorandum to take a forthright and correct stand on the nature of homosexuality would seriously hamper the party's ability to relate to gay liberation. The memorandum's approach would place drastic limitations on our propaganda and reduce our position to one of at best supporting from the outside actions by the gay movement that do not "go beyond" our nonposition. It would exclude actively intervening with a Marxist analysis in a whole series of questions and struggles. Here are but a few examples:

● The Cubans officially adopted the view in 1971 that homosexuality is a "social pathology" that should be rooted out and punished. The vicious and reactionary proposals on homosexuality included in the current draft penal code under consideration in Cuba include punishments for "ostentatious homosexuality" and even the death penalty for some homosexuality-related crimes. This draft penal code was proposed to the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party by none other than the Stalinist hack, Blas Roca, who is being paraded in the Cuban press as the party authority on the matter.

The Cuban record on homosexuality is already shameful. It includes the policy of the mid-sixties of herding gays into concentration camps. Now they are also being credited with the imaginary role of serving as a transmission belt for imperialist ideology into Cuba. The "social pathology" position was adopted at the height of the campaign against the poet Heberto Padilla.

This record is well-known among American gay activists, and it is justifiably hated. It has quite understandably helped to increase suspiciousness among gays about all socialists.

If the party were to declare itself in no position to reject the view that homosexuality is a "social pathology"—and to explain why it is not—then it would be in no position to criticize the unscientific and harmful policy and practice of the Cuban workers state in this regard. Are the Cubans correct in their efforts to eradicate this "social pathology"? Is homosexuality a "social pathology" in Cuba but not in the United States? If it is not a "social pathology," then what is it? If the party were asked, could it assure gays that following a successful socialist revolution in the United States under the leadership of the Socialist Workers Party a similar treatment and policy would not await them? Or is science too much in its "infancy" for us to be able to take a "stand" on such questions?

We suspect that if the memorandum is adopted, the way this dilemma will be resolved will be by attempting to avoid it altogether.

● In addition to the standard view that homosexuality is a product of "bourgeois decadence," the American Communist Party began last fall to call special attention to certain "social ills" within the party, among them homosexuality, which was branded a "bourgeois influence" within

the party. Why have we not attempted to discredit the Stalinists for these views? Probably because doing so properly would require going beyond the fence-straddling position that is being proposed in the memorandum. At best, we could say that the CP is "echoing bourgeois prejudice." This might strike readers as somewhat superficial, however, since it might not be readily apparent to them how branding homosexuality a product of "bourgeois decadence" echoes "bourgeois prejudice."

We suspect that this problem too would be resolved through avoidance. An opportunity to deal a blow to a deserving opponent would be wasted.

● Some gay groups have demanded the inclusion of an objective, unbiased presentation of homosexuality in sex education courses, including courses for children. The Unitarian Church is already including film strips of both heterosexual and homosexual acts in sex education courses throughout the country for 12-to-14-year-old boys and girls.

Could our comrades participate in struggles for the positive inclusion of homosexuality in such courses? Would we support such struggles? Even if this issue could somehow be avoided for now (which might be difficult), it can be expected to become more urgent after the socialist revolution.

● The Black Muslims and some other Black nationalists subscribe to the idiotic view that homosexuality among Blacks is a product of white society and slavery. There is considerable scientific evidence to refute this notion. What position would we be in to combat it if the memorandum were our guide? Or would we regard this as an issue that was too "peripheral" to take on? Would we still regard it as such if it is used against Black homosexual comrades in an effort to discredit the SWP in the Black community?

● Occasionally in forums and meetings of the women's movement, and elsewhere, the question arises as to the nature of homosexuality. Is it a product of class society, for instance? Presumably, if the memorandum is adopted, our comrades will express no opinion on this matter. While it might be argued that this nonposition would have the advantage of preventing comrades who *do* adhere to this idea from saying so publicly, it would also seem to leave us open to charges that we think homosexuality is an aberration of class society.

● In May, New Hampshire Governor Meldrim Thomson Jr. deplored the recognition of the Gay Students Organization by the University of New Hampshire trustees as "repulsive"; the reason he gave was that he opposed recognizing "those harboring a strange affinity for sexual deviation." He promised to replace the trustees as fast as he could.

On what grounds would we support the right of the gay students to organize and gain campus recognition in this case? Merely on a civil liberties basis, asserting that they have a right to exist whether theirs is a "strange affinity for sexual deviation" or not? Would we simply regard the nature of the students' sexual orientation as irrelevant? Or would we help expose the bigotry of the governor as well? To do so would require going beyond the agnosticism of the memorandum on the nature of homosexuality. If homosexuality is not a "strange affinity for sexual deviation," then what is it?

● One issue the gay movement has been campaigning on is to get the American Psychiatric Association to drop homosexuality from its diagnostic category of illnesses. The memorandum's position rejecting various theories that gays are mentally ill provides an inadequate basis for relating to this essential campaign: (1) the position is contradicted, and therefore negated, by the refusal to take a stand on the "nature" of homosexuality; (2) The fact that some familiarity with the "theories" themselves, some knowledge about the scientific evidence relating to homosexuality, and a commitment to a scientifically and historically correct grasp of this question would be prerequisites to involvement in such a campaign would place it outside the scope of the "support" for gay liberation laid down in the memorandum. Such a campaign, moreover, would probably not even merit serious attention in our press. To give coverage to it might give the erroneous impression that we considered it too important, or, worse yet, that we actually had a position on it. This, too, would be easier to deal with by avoiding it.

● Even a serious propaganda intervention (let alone an intervention into the organized gay movement) would be impossible without a clear position recognizing homosexuality as being in no way inferior to heterosexuality. Feature articles, analytical articles, polemical articles, etc., would tend to disappear (as they have during the past two years) because such articles might tend to suggest that we did not regard the gay struggle as "peripheral," "narrow," or unimportant.

Something for Everybody

Section 3 of the memorandum places the current wave of the gay liberation struggle in its recent historical context. It notes that it was the rise of the gay liberation movement that forced the SWP to "clarify" its position on gay oppression and to "discuss our relationship to this movement." It characterizes the movement as "progressive," and adds that "it helps break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society." This struggle, it states, is "in the interests of socialism. . . ."

By and large, the positions put forward in this section are correct. Since so much of the rest of the memorandum is either incorrect, inadequate, or obfuscatory, however, one can only conclude that the memorandum as a whole has been put together with a view toward providing something for everybody. Those comrades who have a high opinion of gay liberation could easily agree with this section, while comrades who do not want the party to get involved in gay liberation can be reassured by the fact that the heart of what the memorandum is proposing lies elsewhere.

The section concludes on a note of ambiguity: "The party identifies with the aims of this struggle and supports it, and this is reflected in the political position the party has adopted and reaffirmed in this report."

The ultimate aim of the gay liberation struggle is not simply to win equal rights for a presently constituted minority of persons defined as gay, but to destroy the exclusive heterosexual norm of capitalist society (as well as of the workers states). It is for the full acceptance of homosexual behavior as being no less valid and not inferior to heterosexual behavior. Does the memorandum mean to put the party on record as identifying with this,

the central aim of gay liberation? If so, would this not contradict its already stated position of not taking a stand on the "nature or value" of homosexuality? And what is the usefulness of reaffirming "support" to the gay liberation struggle so long as the nature of that "support" is never defined as clearly going beyond verbal support?

What 'Relatively Narrow Sector'?

In proposing to "look at the question of priorities" in deciding what attitude to take toward the gay liberation movement, the memorandum says that the movement "directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population."

On what is this statement based? Certainly not on scientific evidence— or even common knowledge. Although exact numerical precision is impossible (and beside the point in any case), commonly accepted statistics indicate that this is far from a "narrow sector." According to Kinsey, around 10 percent of the adult population of the United States—or some 20,000,000 Americans—are predominantly homosexual, with millions more having significant homosexual experience in their adult lives.

These people are all made into outlaws merely for acting upon their sexual orientation; they face multiple and severe forms of discrimination and oppression—both physical and psychological—in their daily lives.

These millions include persons from all walks of life, and every section of the population—workers, students, women, Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, etc.

What is "relatively narrow" about this sector of the population? All evidence shows that neither the numbers, nor the distribution in the population of this sector justifies the assertion that it is "relatively narrow."

Perhaps the memorandum meant to place the stress on the words "directly relates." If so, did it mean to suggest that the appeal of the gay liberation movement "directly relates" only to people who engage in gay sex, and that since this proportion of the population is generally regarded as a minority (however large), therefore the movement "directly relates" to a sector that is "relatively narrow" in comparison to the majority of the population, which is not gay? Even such an implication would be false— unless one's definition of "narrow" can be stretched to encompass the many millions of Americans who regularly engage in homosexual acts.

Indeed, what does the memorandum mean by the words "directly relates"? Does the gay liberation movement "directly relate" to the millions of gays in every sector of society, or just to the small percentage that are directly involved in the gay movement today? If the National Committee believes that the gay movement relates only to those that are directly involved in that movement, does it hold the same for the women's liberation movement and the struggles of the oppressed nationalities? If not, why does it not think that the gay movement can mobilize millions of gays in struggles for their rights?

"There are no driving forces that can impel in a mass effort a significant portion of the claimed tens of millions of gays out of the 'closet' and into their full struggle for their rights," wrote Comrade Nat Weinstein in last year's library discussion on gay liberation. (Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 11). Does the National Committee subscribe to this view?

And does the gay liberation movement *indirectly* relate to a "relatively narrow" sector of the population too? Can the aims of the gay liberation movement relate indirectly to persons with a heterosexual orientation? If not, why not? If so, is this not a relevant political consideration in determining the "potential mass" and "social weight" of the gay liberation struggle?

The neglect of the memorandum to discuss these questions, and its failure to present any facts to back up its assertion that the gay movement "directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population," render its subsequent analysis of the potential of the gay struggle useless as a guide to assessing the party's proper role in relating this struggle to the struggle for socialism.

The memorandum's characterization of the gay liberation movement and its potential is essentially negative. It asserts that "the gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movements of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise"; that it is "much narrower [than these other movements] in the scope of its demands"; that it is "much more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle"; and that it is not among "the big questions of the class struggle upon which we should be concentrating." These assertions reflect a false analysis.

The memorandum purports to prove the "peripheral" and "narrow" nature of the gay liberation movement by comparing it to the movements of women and the oppressed nationalities. However, even a quick look reveals the inadequacy of this comparison; while the memorandum discusses how the feminist and nationalist movements have an anticapitalist thrust, it stops short of offering any serious analysis of the gay liberation movement and its thrust.

It does state that the issue raised by the gay liberation movement "is essentially limited to the struggle for the democratic rights of this [relatively narrow] sector." Before commenting further on this observation, let us note its negative slant and tone. The issue of the democratic rights of gays is a "limited" one—limited, in fact, to the struggle of one particular sector of the population (incorrectly defined as "relatively narrow.") This in itself is a misleading way of regarding the gay liberation struggle. First, the gay struggle is not limited merely to fighting for the democratic rights of persons presently defined as gay; it aims ultimately at destroying the anti-homosexual, exclusively heterosexual norm of society that puts a crimp on the freedom of *all* members of society, not just gays. It is not a struggle merely for civil rights, but for full human rights. The issue it ultimately raises is one that is in the interests of all the oppressed, both because its struggle is aimed against the same oppressor—capitalism—and because it points the way to a society of sexual freedom for everyone. Second, even the struggle for the democratic rights of the minority of persons presently defined as gay has potential for reaching out to and involving in action broader layers of the population.

Furthermore, the struggle for gay rights has ramifications that go far beyond the sexual sphere. It directly challenges the official morality that provides the cement holding together class society. Bourgeois morality serves to make people toe the line and plays an important role

in the mechanics of class deception, veiling class relations under the abstract norms of religion, philosophy, etc.

But what does the memorandum mean by saying that the issue is "essentially" limited to "this sector"? Obviously, it implies that it is not *exclusively* limited to this sector. In what way, then, is it not? What other sectors might it also be "limited" to? Such vague and slippery formulations pervade the memorandum. They do nothing to produce clarity.

Democratic Demands

The memorandum notes, correctly, that the gay liberation struggle involves a struggle for democratic demands. However, since this observation is made in the context of an attempt to prove the inferior significance of the gay struggle to that of some other movements, and since no special discussion is made of the nature of these democratic demands, the implication is given—whether intentionally or not—that democratic demands are in themselves somehow inferior to other kinds of demands, because they do not directly call into question the right of the ruling class to rule, or the existence of capitalism. That this is, indeed, the spirit in which this observation is often taken can be seen in the fact that it is not at all unusual to hear supporters of the memorandum tortuously striving to "prove" that the gay liberation struggle is not *really* important by showing that it raises no transitional demands—"only" democratic demands. While to some such an argument may have a reassuringly theoretical ring, in fact it leads only to a serious misappreciation of the living class struggle. We think that Comrade George Novack provided a good refutation of such thinking in his contribution to last year's literary discussion on gay liberation:

"It is one of the tenets of the theory of permanent revolution that demands for democratic and civil rights by large groups of people may be partially conceded but their needs cannot be fundamentally and fully realized under imperialist auspices. The struggle of homosexuals for an end to their victimization is no exception. The removal of certain legal inequities and disabilities will not suffice to give them the dignity they seek. The changes they aspire to bring about not only affront deeply lodged prejudices of bourgeois society and the churches, but call into question auxiliary props of the nuclear family and the marriage code.

"The attacks upon such institutional arrangements of the established order imparts an anticapitalist tendency to the gay struggle, even if many of its participants fail to recognize the underlying social and political implications of their challenges." ("The Party's Orientation Toward Gay Liberation," Discussion Bulletin Vol. 30 No. 8, p. 4)

What, concretely, is it that the gay liberation movement is demanding? It is demanding something very fundamental, something no other movement needs to demand: the right to *exist* at all, the right to *be* gay. The efforts of society to suppress homosexual behavior lead to physical persecution, social discrimination, and mental anguish for tens of millions of people. This has meant a historical legacy of some of the most brutal persecution experienced by any group of human beings, including burning at the stake, physical mutilation, burial alive, and, more recently, gas chambers. The struggle for the

democratic rights of this group of persons whom society is predicated upon eradicating is certainly the kind of struggle that revolutionists should be seriously discussing ways to champion and embrace, rather than seeking arguments that might conceivably be used — and are being used — to justify abstention from that struggle.

Potential Mass' and 'Social Weight'

The memorandum goes on to state that "the gay liberation movement does not have the potential mass of either the women's movement or the movement of the major oppressed nationalities, nor the social weight of these movements, which result both from their mass and the scope of the questions they raise."

First, on "potential mass." Just what is meant by this concept? Does it mean the total number of persons the movement "directly relates" to at the present time ("gay people")? If so, the statement is obviously false. While there are more women than there are gays, there are more gays in the United States than there are members of any of the "major oppressed nationalities."

Yet in another sense, it could be argued that the potential number of gays is far greater than either their own present numbers or the numbers of women, Blacks, Chicanos, or any other group; for already with Kinsey it was shown, for instance, that as many as 50 percent of American males admitted that they felt sexual attractions to other males. Since one is not born with an ability to make love only to persons of the opposite sex, and since such high percentages admit to having homosexual impulses even under a society that severely punishes such behavior, it should be obvious that the potential number of persons who will act out their homosexual desires is always greater than the actual number who do at any one time; indeed, that number could potentially encompass everyone. Perhaps by "potential mass" the memorandum meant the numbers that could conceivably be mobilized in action around the demands of the movement. If so, it should have explained why the potential mass of Blacks (who number fewer than gays) would be greater than that of gays. Are gays less mobilizable? Is it because national minorities tend to be concentrated in urban ghettos or particular geographical areas, whereas gays are spread throughout the entire country, throughout all social and occupational strata, etc.? The failure of the memorandum to discuss any of these questions might give the impression that its concept of the "potential mass" of the gay liberation movement is the distillation of considerable analysis. In our opinion, however, in the absence of any analysis the concept raises more questions than it might at first glance seem to answer.

The same can be said of the negative appraisal of the "social weight" of the gay liberation movement. Regardless of the validity of the concept of "social weight," it is a virtually useless criterion for determining the party's approach to the movement. The limitations of this concept can be seen in the superficiality of the way it is applied in the memorandum to the national minorities and the women's movement.

The gist of the "analysis" that follows is that the women's movement and the national minorities have greater "potential mass" and greater "social weight" (and are therefore of greater concern to the revolutionary party) than the gay movement because they raise either "demands

of the working class as a whole," "national-democratic demands" that "cannot be met except through the proletarian revolution," or "class demands." The memorandum, by way of "comparison," then dismisses, without any analysis whatever, the gay movement as being "much narrower in the scope of its demands."

Let us look a bit more closely at these distinctions.

While it is true that the national minorities raise "national-democratic demands" and that these cannot be fully met short of the socialist revolution, the same thing can be said of the democratic demands of the gay liberation movement. In this sense, both movements have an anti-capitalist thrust. In what way is the scope of the demands of the gay movement "much narrower" than that of the national minorities? Certainly the struggle for freedom of sexual expression, which ultimately touches everyone, cannot be said to have a "much narrower" appeal than the struggle for, say, Black control of the Black community.

And if it is true that the national minorities are overwhelmingly proletarian in composition, it is also true of gays.

In what way do the national minorities raise almost from the very beginning "demands of the working class as a whole" that the gay liberation movement does not? Many of the demands of the Black movement are rejected outright and meet with open hostility on the part of white workers, who, for the most part, are racist. That does not lead revolutionists to urge Blacks to adapt their demands or limit their struggle to issues acceptable to the working class as a whole.

Similarly, we believe that the gay liberation movement raises from the very beginning "demands of the working class as a whole." The fact that the prejudice of straight workers probably runs deeper on the question of homosexuality than on any other question in no way changes this.

And how does the women's movement raise "class demands" that are, apparently, foreign to the gay movement? Is the demand for abortion a "class demand"? While abortion certainly benefits working women, it can hardly be said to have class limitations. True, the women's movement naturally raises other demands, such as "equal pay for equal work," that are "class demands." But so does the gay movement. Is not the demand for an end to employment discrimination against gays a "class demand"?

Moreover, aside from the fact that the struggle for homosexual liberation is in and of itself a struggle that is in the interest of the working class and the struggle for freedom for the oppressed in general, struggles by gays have raised specific class issues, benefited the working class, and in some cases been supported by unions. A few examples are: struggles against government or employer snooping into private lives; a suit during the 1950s for the right to send literature through the mails; struggles against arbitrary firing, or firing because of an arrest record; etc. Last spring a California Edison worker was fired after having been arrested near a gay bar in Southern California. He decided to fight it. When his union moved to institute grievance proceedings, the company backed down and rehired him.

In New York, a number of union leaders have recognized gay rights as an issue of relevance to the labor movement, not merely because many of their members